Hüseyin Işıksal · Oğuzhan Göksel *Editors*

Turkey's Relations with the Middle East

Political Encounters after the Arab Spring

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To our families, Aliya, Bilgehan İrfan and Hakan Halil Işıksal and Necati and Nagihan Göksel whose non-political lovely encounters with eternal love, support and courage make us who we are.

Foreword

Due to its geopolitical location and historical ties, Turkey has long been a major actor in the Middle East. In recent years, the significance of the country has become more pronounced for both domestic and foreign policy reasons. On the international stage, Turkey has been deeply involved in many complex regional and international issues such as the Syrian civil war, the political chaos in Iraq, the aftermath of the Arab uprisings, the Kurdish issue and the Sunni-Shi'a divide. In this context, since 2002, Turkey has adopted an assertive and interventionist Middle East policy, under the rule of the Justice and Development Party (AKP). In the aftermath of the 2011 Arab uprisings, Turkey was proposed by many international actors (such as the EU and the USA) and commentators as a model for the Middle East and the broader Muslim world by virtue of its supposed achievements in economic development, secularisation and democratisation. However, these initial hopes have subsided in recent years. The post-2011 Middle East international environment, as this volume details, has become more turbulent than ever, and even though the uprisings initially seemed as a historic opportunity for the rise of Turkish influence in the region, the outbreak of civil war in Syria (coupled with domestic developments in Turkey) seems to have marked the "beginning of the end" for the Turkish model. Domestic and international developments have also contributed to a more troublesome situation for Turkish politics, society and economy.

This very timely volume, edited by Dr. Hüseyin Işıksal and Dr. Oğuzhan Göksel, focuses on these political, economic and social developments and on the interactions between Turkey and the post-2011 Middle East. The volume clearly focuses more on the foreign policy than on the domestic aspect of Turkish politics. This, however, does not detract from the volume. The chapters cover a wide range of issues and often draw an interesting comparison between developments in Turkey and developments in other countries of the region. Perhaps even more importantly, the chapters help in contextualising current developments in the Middle East and Turkey by pointing to the history and development of Turkey's foreign policy and international posture. The volume's breadth and the range of expertise of the contributors guarantee a comprehensive assessment of Turkey's foreign policy, of

its origins and conduct. From an empirical perspective, issues discussed in the volume include among others the 2011 Arab uprisings, the civil conflict in Syria, the emergence of ISIS and the Kurdish question. The volume, however, also offers valuable theoretical contributions by assessing the status of the literature of Turkish foreign policy and Turkey's role in the region, the rise and decline of the Turkish model as well as the strengths and weaknesses of Turkey's posture of "Neo-Ottomanism". This is discussed by showing a deep knowledge and understanding of various approaches in IR theory, including realism, Marxism and post-colonial studies. This volume will benefit scholars and students interested in the political affairs and foreign policy of Turkey. It will also benefit scholars with a more general interest in contextualising and problematising recent developments in the Middle East.

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Luca Trenta

Preface

The origins of this book lie in a decision that dates back to 2015 when we were making one of our routine phone calls between Girne-İstanbul lines. There were extensive discussions about the Turkish model as a “model of economic development and democratisation” for the emerging post-uprising regimes of the Middle East. We noticed that although there were various discussions, the topic was under-examined and often misunderstood as many seemed to ignore the challenges inherent in the complex dynamics of this region. Therefore, we reached to the consensus that this was the right time for a new volume with a broad range of contemporary concerns that would contribute to the understanding of the Middle East after the 2011 Arab Spring and Turkey’s increasingly challenging role in it.

Writing and editing such a detailed volume is not an easy task. Needless to say, it could not have been possible without the assistance of a number of colleagues and friends. Thus, we would like to take this opportunity to thank those who have kindly provided their help and encouragement throughout this project. First of all, we are very grateful to the authors of the chapters for their valuable contributions. We are also grateful to His Excellency Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey Murat Karayalçın, Prof. Bülent Gökay and Prof. Tareq Ismael for their valuable comments and reviews. We are also thankful to Dr. Luca Trenta for an insightful foreword.

We thank Simon Thompson from Near East University, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, for his assistance with the proof-reading of some chapters. We would also like to acknowledge the gracious support given to us by our editor, Dr. Johannes Glaeser, whose suggestions have significantly improved the quality of the manuscript.

Much gratitude and appreciation are due to our parents Seval and İrfan Işıksal and Necati and Nagihan Göksel for their encouragement and ever-present support. We know how lucky we are to be members of these families. Without your support, we would not become who we are today and this endeavour would not have been possible. We thank you very much for everything from the bottom of our hearts!

Finally, we wish to separately note our gratitude to the following people:

The persons to whom I (Hüseyin Işıksal) personally owe the greatest debt are my family. I would like to thank my beautiful wife Aliya Işıksal for her understanding, encouragement and everlasting support. Similarly, I am so grateful to my two baby sons Bilgehan İrfan and Hakan Halil for their inspiration and keeping me less busy than usual during the preparation of the book. In this respect, I am so thankful to my mother Seval Işıksal and my mother-in-law Alma Rakhmetullina for their continuous support and taking care of my sons.

I (Oğuzhan Göksel) thank with all my heart my colleagues and dear friends Michelangelo Guida, Fabio Vicini, Emrah Safa Gürkan and Özgür Ünal Eriş. Michelangelo Hoca has not only co-authored a chapter with me but also greatly contributed to the rest of this volume with his wise counsel, pleasant conversations over coffee and [elder] brotherly support. My chats with Fabio and Özgür Hoca have always cheered me up when feeling not particularly energetic, and as such, I truly feel privileged for sharing an office with them. Last but not least, Emrah (a.k.a. ESG the pirate) has contributed to the volume with his helpful advice on the publishing process as well as his competitiveness! I am sure that our pleasant little publication competition will continue to benefit "academia"—if not the academic community, then surely the website at least!

Nicosia, North Cyprus — Hüseyin Işıksal
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Chapter 1
Introduction: The Politics of Power Amidst the Uprisings of Hope

Oğuzhan Göksel

> *A day will come when justice will be done.... We will not be deceived by partial solutions....*
> *The dawn of freedom has arrived. The will of the nations will be re-established.* (Lahlali 2014) (Popular slogans used during the 2011 protests in Egypt.)

Since the Arab Uprisings of 2011, popularly known as the "Arab Spring,"[1] the Middle East—with its rapidly changing political setting—has been a key center of attention for media and academia.[2] It has become commonplace to refer to this increasingly turbulent region as the "new Middle East" or the "postrevolutionary Middle East," though uncertainties stemming from the indeterminate future of regime changes in Tunisia and Egypt as well as the civil wars in Syria, Libya, Yemen, and Iraq continue. In recent years, Turkey, a country that used to remain in the fringes of the region with its noninterventionist stance, has been heavily involved in the affairs of the Middle East. This has been reflected on the highly interventionist policies of the incumbent AKP (Justice and Development Party) administration toward the 2011 and 2013 uprisings in Egypt, the ongoing civil war in Syria, Iran's controversial nuclear program, the region-wide tensions between

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[1] It is important to note that there is an ongoing debate on the terminology of the 2011 protests and many observers object to the use of "Arab Spring" because of its supposed Orientalist connotations (Pace and Cavatorta 2012, p. 136). Nevertheless, we have decided against the imposition of the usage of a consistent term throughout the volume, and most contributors use the terms "spring," "revolutions," and "uprisings" interchangeably. After all, the events will continue to shape regional affairs for many years to come, and only the future generations can possibly make an informed judgment on the meaning, impact, and legacy of this ongoing political phenomenon.

[2] For notable works studying the causes, consequences, and ongoing trajectory of the Arab Spring, see Danahar (2013), Fisk and Cockburn (2016), Brownlee et al. (2015), Dabashi (2012), Howard and Hussain (2013), Prashad (2012), and Korany and El-Mahdi (2014).

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Sunni and Shi'a groups, the rise of the ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, *Daesh* in Arabic), and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

Immediately after the 2011 uprisings, Turkey was initially portrayed by many observers[3] as a "model of economic development and democratization" for the emerging post-uprising regimes of the region; however, the interaction between Turkey and Middle Eastern countries has since then proved to be much more complex rather than reflecting a mere one-sided influence from Ankara. The impact of the ever-deepening interaction between Turkey and Middle Eastern countries is not only limited to the volume of trade or political–military relations, extending to issues that have been traditionally regarded as purely domestic matters such as terrorism, social movements (e.g., the 2013 Gezi Park protests and the 2013 uprisings in Egypt), and minority rights struggles (i.e., the regionalization of Turkey's so-called Kurdish issue with the expansion of the Kurdish armed struggle to Syria).

This volume, entitled *Turkey's Relations with the Middle East: Political Encounters After the Arab Spring*, aims to focus on the aforementioned political, economic, and social interactions between Turkey and the post-2011 Middle East, contributing to the ever-expanding scholarly literature on Turkish and Middle Eastern studies with original chapters on selected themes. In these unsettling and interesting times exceptional even for a region that is notorious for being acutely unstable, this study aims to serve as a platform for evaluating a number of topics that have attracted much media attention in recent years but insufficient scholarly analyses.

There are numerous publications on Turkish foreign policy in general, as well as on more specific subjects such as Turkish–Kurdish relations, Turkish–Iranian relations, and Turkey–EU relations. There is also a plethora of specialized research articles that study various dimensions of Turkey–Middle East interactions in the post-2011 period via original frameworks (e.g., Dalacoura 2012, 2013; Öniş 2012, 2014; Altunışık and Martin 2011; Oğuzlu 2012; Ennis and Momani 2013; Özhan 2011; Kirişçi 2011; Dal 2012; Gause III 2011; Salloukh 2013; Pupcenoks 2012; Noi 2012). However, very few comprehensive volumes holistically cover the political interaction between Turkey and the Middle East since the 2011 Arab Uprisings. There have been some notable attempts at synthetic analysis, yet none has adopted as broad a focus as is the one utilized in this volume.

Richard Weitz's *The Rise of Turkey* (2015) examines Turkey's increasing influence in Middle Eastern affairs in recent years, but, although its conceptualization and arguments are very original, it limits its attention to Turkey's emergent role as a "security and stability provider" and the implications of this for the US foreign and security policy toward the region. Jed Babbin, David P. Goldman, and Herbert I. London's *The Sunni Vanguard* (2014) discusses the political crises and armed conflicts that have emerged as a result of the 2011 uprisings across the region, arguing that Turkey, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia collectively constitute a "moderate

[3]See, for example, Dede (2011), Göksel (2012), Perekli (2012), Bali (2011), and Dal and Erşen (2014).

Sunni vanguard" against instability, radical Islamism, and terrorism. The volume offers a number of helpful insights into the balance of power in the Middle East and the roles of these three regional powers in that regard; however, it does not sufficiently cover the emergent sectarian conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran as well as the roles of other key actors in the region such as the USA, Russia, and the Kurds. Moreover, it does not critically engage with the concept of "moderate Islamism" itself and does not question the validity of its main argument considering that there are close ideological ties between the Wahhabi Saudi regime and armed groups considered to be "radical Islamist" such as al-Qaeda and ISIS.

Cihan Tuğal's *The Fall of the Turkish Model* (2016) is a paradigm-shifting account of the social/intellectual interactions between the political movements of four notable Middle Eastern countries (i.e., Turkey, Egypt, Tunisia, and Iran) in the post-Arab Spring era. This work compares the political trajectories of these countries in recent years as well as providing a detailed political economic historical background to their current predicaments. Though its ideas have been inspirational for us, *The Fall of the Turkish Model* is essentially a strong critique of the political theory literature on the Arab Spring, whereas this volume instead is multidisciplinary in nature—albeit with a particular focus on the foreign relations between Turkey and other key actors of the Middle East. Distinguished scholars Bülent Aras and Fuat Keyman's edited volume, *Turkey, the Arab Spring and Beyond* (2016), is one of the closest studies to this volume in terms of its scope. They offer a landmark work of great value to those interested in Turkish and Middle Eastern studies, in particular in the post-2011 Middle Eastern strategy of Turkey. As Aras and Keyman's volume largely concentrates on Turkey's relations with Iran and Gulf countries (e.g., Qatar), however, our work differs from it in terms of its broader scope covering Turkey's interactions with Egypt, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) of Iraq, Syria, Russia, the USA, and the ISIS.

Due to their potentially similar focus and orientation to this volume, two other works in the existing scholarly literature demands our attention: Henri J. Barkey's *Reluctant Neighbor: Turkey's Role in the Middle East* (1997) and Graham E. Fuller's *Turkey and the Arab Spring: Leadership in the Middle East* (2014). Barkey's edited work is a comprehensive volume that includes chapters regarding Turkey's economic development opportunities, the Kurdish issue, and Turkey's relations with Middle Eastern and post-Soviet Central Asian countries in the post-Cold War era. It basically argues that Turkey, as a "reluctant neighbor," holds a unique position between east and west in a strategically important geographical location. The book contends that with the end of the Cold War in 1991, Turkey emerged as a regional power and a notable regulator of peace in the Middle East. It is also suggested that as Turkey had finally freed itself from the Soviet Russian threat, it would naturally move further toward the western axis and that this process could create better opportunities for the country to build stronger ties with its neighbors such as Greece, Iraq, and Syria.

As the book was published in the euphoric post-Cold War environment in 1997, many of its arguments are now dated, while its analytical lenses are clearly

Eurocentric and pro-American rather than offering an objective understanding of Turkey's role and influence in the broader Middle Eastern region. Much has changed in the orientation of Turkish foreign policy since the late 1990s, and it can be argued that such a work can no longer grasp the nature of a Turkey that has been ruled for more than 15 years by a party (i.e., the AKP) that did not even exist in 1997. The same can be said in the case of Middle Eastern politics as the affairs of the region have been dramatically altered with the 2011 Arab Uprisings, an ongoing extremely tumultuous process that could not be possibly envisaged by any observer back in the late 1990s.

Akin to Barkey's, Graham Fuller's work is also a broad volume. The lengthiest section of the work examines the strengths and weaknesses of the so-called Turkish model for the Middle East. There are also brief discussions regarding Turkey's relations with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Iran, Iraq, and the autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq. Nevertheless, the work is solely concerned with assessing Turkey's supposed leadership role in the region and attempts to portray all the other states in the region as potential challengers to Turkey's regional hegemony. As such, beyond comprehensively covering Turkey's search for an increased role in the region, the book overlooks many of the debates this volume includes (e.g., the impact of the 2011 Arab Uprisings on Turkey's relations with key regional powers such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, the trajectory of the Syrian Civil War, comparative analysis of Arab Uprisings and the Gezi Park protests, and the latest developments in the Kurdish issue in the Middle East). As Fuller completed his manuscript in late 2013, naturally he could not mention the rapid political developments that have shaken the region since then. For instance, Fuller missed out Turkey's ongoing post-2013 internal turmoil as a result of intensifying terrorist attacks, its shift toward illiberalism, the spillover of the Syrian conflict on Turkish borders, and the failed coup attempt on 15 July 2016.

In contrast to the notable works on Turkey–Middle East relations mentioned above, this volume covers a wide range of issues and contains analyses on the theoretical grounding of Turkish foreign policy, the rise and subsequent fall of the Turkish model, and the evaluation of the fragility of Turkey's soft power in light of its inability to control the fate of the Middle East after the 2011 uprisings. As such, what make this work truly unique are its contemporary analyses and references to recent events such as the Arab uprisings, the ISIS, the Syrian Crisis, the escalation of regional terrorism, and the military coup attempt in Turkey.

It is important to note that the volume takes an inclusive multidimensional approach and allows the contributors to determine which independent variables—soft power, hard power, the Turkish model, regional influence, democratization, domestic authority, and many others—are more important for their specific cases rather than forcefully superimposing strict theoretical/methodological lenses that may not be applicable for all the different empirical studies. As such, this collection has provided a platform for researchers to freely present their ideas and original findings based on new conceptual frameworks—ultimately seeking to challenge many of the prevailing dogmas and conventional understandings in the fields of Turkish foreign policy and Middle Eastern politics.

Though the contributions included in this volume vary in terms of their theoretical and disciplinary approaches, the common thread that binds them is that *self-interest* and *political survival* continue to drive Middle Eastern affairs and that the utopian promises of the Arab Spring have not changed this reality on the ground. As suggested by distinguished political scientists Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Alastair Smith in their lucidly written work, *The Dictator's Handbook* (2011), the "politics of power" determine the nature and ever-changing dynamics of the Middle East. As seen in the popular slogans quoted at the very beginning of this introduction, "changing the rules of the game" in their respective countries and in the entire region was the main factor that motivated the protestors during the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Libya, and Yemen, among others; however, ultimately these uprisings have hardly changed the way the system works:

> What remarkable puzzles politics provides. Every day's headlines shock and surprise us. Daily we hear of frauds, chicanery, and double-dealing... and even murders perpetrated by government leaders. We cannot help but wonder what flaws of culture, religion, upbringing, or historical circumstance explain the rise of these malevolent despots...Is it true, as Shakespeare's Cassius said, that the fault lies not in the starts but in ourselves? Or, more particularly, in those who lead us? Most of us are content to believe that. And yet the truth is far different... The world of politics is distorted by rules. Short is the term of any ruler foolish enough to govern without submitting to these rules to rule by. (de Mesquita and Smith 2011, p. IX)

The rules mentioned above can be termed the politics of power. Accordingly, a regime can only survive and remain in power if it provides its local and foreign backers more benefits than rival regimes or alternative leaders (de Mesquita and Smith 2011, pp. 4–15). The Middle East, much like anywhere else in the world, has its own rules that constrain the actions of political actors and/or drive them to act in a particular way. Though many may think otherwise, the rules of the Middle East are not primarily shaped by culture, religion, ethnicities, or authoritarianism and political violence that are the "timeless norms" of these peoples.

The Middle Eastern "deck of cards" was shuffled historically by Western colonialism and its regional allies. Moreover, Western colonialism did not suddenly disappear at the end of World War II when Middle Eastern societies nominally gained their independence during the so-called decolonization period. Instead, Western actors have continued to shuffle the cards in the region in accordance with their global visions. Any analysis that does not fully acknowledge this point cannot realistically account for the course of actions in Middle Eastern politics. For instance, the Islamist Mohamed Morsi administration in Egypt did not play "by the rules" determined by the West and adopted an anti-Western, anti-Israeli, and revisionist posture in foreign policy by fostering strong ties with Tehran, Beijing, and Moscow (Özkan 2013). Unsurprisingly, he was overthrown with a military coup. However, other powers in the region such as the Saudi monarchy have been in rule for a long time precisely because they abide by the rules of the game.

As such, each contribution included in this volume shows glimpses of the bitter reality of Middle Eastern politics: those playing the game according to the politics of power tend to win, while idealists tend to lose. In the post-Arab Spring period,

predominantly realist actors (e.g., Iran, the Assad regime, Russia, and Saudi Arabia) have largely obtained their foreign policy objectives, while actors approaching issues on the basis of ethical concerns or idealistic visions (e.g., Turkey, Islamist political parties, and the Arab Spring protestors) have not been as successful as their pragmatist counterparts. Turkey, for instance, has been squeezed between idealism and realism (Öniş 2012), and it has gained more when acting as a realist actor (e.g., its relations with the KRG in Iraq), while it has largely failed when acting as an idealist (e.g., in the Syrian Civil War).

The volume contains contributions that critically analyze the recent dramatic fluctuations in Turkish foreign policy toward key Middle Eastern powers (e.g., Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, and Iraq) as well as the democratization (or lack thereof), social movements (Gezi Park protests), and minority rights issues of Turkey that have increasingly been "regionalized" as a result of the increased interaction between Turkey and Middle East countries. Once ruled by an elite (i.e., the Kemalists) that was extremely uneasy with the idea of identifying with the Middle East, the AKP-led Turkey has fully delved into the political, socioeconomic, and military affairs of the region. Nowadays, it is very hard to find news articles, academic works, and government reports that analyze major regional issues such as the Syrian Civil War, the political chaos in Iraq, and the Sunni–Shi'a divide without mentioning the role of Turkey at all. Nevertheless, there is gap in the existing scholarly literature in terms of covering the ever-changing dynamics of the politics of Turkey and the Middle East since the fateful days of 2011 Arab Uprisings which gave birth to several ongoing crises (e.g., the Syrian refugee crisis; the rise and fall of a democratic regime in Egypt; civil wars in Yemen, Syria, and Libya; and the rise of ISIS terrorism) that continue to remake the region today.

The first contribution of the volume by Hüseyin Işıksal, entitled "Turkish Foreign Policy, the Arab Spring and the Syrian Crisis," focuses on the broad trends in the Middle Eastern policy of Turkey since 2011, with a particular focus on the determining role played by the ongoing Syrian Crisis in shaping Turkish foreign policy as well as the national security of the country. The consecutive contributions by Oğuzhan Göksel and Stefano Torelli in Part I both discuss the widely referenced Turkish model debate. Göksel's work, entitled "Eurocentrism Awakened," locates the media and academic attention toward the concept of Turkish model within the long tradition of Eurocentrism that continues to characterize the mainstream Western understandings of modernity, development, and democratization in the Middle Eastern region. Torelli's work, entitled "The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Model for the Middle East," tackles the same issue by highlighting the inherent contradictions of presenting a highly problematic (in terms of the weakness of its own democratic consolidation process and shaky economic development) and sui generis country case such as Turkey as an applicable model for an entire region that consists of societies that have dramatically diverged from each other in terms of their socioeconomic and political trajectories since World War II. The last contribution in Part I, Cemal Burak Tansel's "Ties that Bind," compares the 2011 uprising in Egypt with the 2013 Gezi Park protests in Turkey, arguing that the devastating socioeconomic consequences of neoliberal policies that have been

followed in both countries since the early 1980s account for the origins of both attempts to challenge the political economic order.

The first contribution in Part II, Hüseyin Işıksal's "Political Chaos in Iraq, ISIS, and Turkish Foreign Policy," tracks the historical roots of the political chaos in Iraq and the rise of ISIS in the Levant to the Western-imposed Sykes–Picot order or what the author terms the "Westphalian delusion"—namely, the attempt of the hitherto colonial masters of the Middle East (Britain and France) to artificially construct a political system based on ahistorical boundaries drawn with complete disregard for the ethnic and sectarian compositions of Iraq and Syria. Işıksal also covers the ups and downs of Turkish foreign policy toward the Levant and the reaction of Ankara to the rise of ISIS. Süleyman Elik's "The Arab Spring and Turkish–Iranian Relations" concentrates on the post-2011 trajectory of Turkey–Iran relations, explaining the complex reasons behind the emergence of a strong clash of interest between Ankara and Tehran over the fate of the Syria–Iraq crisis and the way in which this has led to the weakening of the alliance the two countries had established earlier in the late 2000s.

The following contribution by Konstantinos Zarras, entitled "Assessing the Regional Influence and Relations of Turkey and Saudi Arabia After the Arab Spring," studies the state of Turkey–Saudi Arabia relations since the 2011 Arab Uprisings and suggests that the same ambitious regional aspirations that have brought the two regional powers together in the Syrian Civil War also paradoxically create deep political rifts between them. The final contribution in Part II, Nikos Christofis' "Turkey, Cyprus, and the Arab Uprisings," analyzes the continuing role of Turkey in Cyprus (via its influence over the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus) and discusses the way in which the Turkish foreign policy toward the island has been affected by the turbulence of the 2011 Arab Uprisings.

Part III of the volume focuses on Turkey's domestic politics and its engagements with non-state actors of the Middle East. In the first contribution of this part, entitled "Reevaluating the Sources and Fragility of Turkey's Soft Power After the Arab Uprisings," Michelangelo Guida and Oğuzhan Göksel adopt a holistic approach toward the analysis of Turkey's Middle Eastern policy, providing a broad overview of the post-2011 period that covers its economic, cultural, and military dimensions. The authors argue that the inability of Turkey to control the evolution of the 2011 uprisings in Syria and elsewhere is caused by various structural weaknesses within its own economic development level, intelligence service, and democratization process, in other words in its "soft power capabilities." The following work by Hakan Köni, entitled "Comparing the Political Experiences of Justice and Development Party in Turkey and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt," compares and contrasts the trajectories of conservatism in Turkey and Egypt, explaining in particular the striking differences between the political strategies adopted by the AKP and the Muslim Brotherhood, respectively. The author contend that these differences account for why the AKP has managed to remain in power in Turkey since 2002, while—after a brief spell under President Morsi—the Muslim Brotherhood has been almost entirely annihilated by forces of the *ancien* regime in Egypt.

The other two contributions within Part III both study the post-2011 developments in the Kurdish issue in the Middle East. In his work entitled "Turkey's Evolving Relations with the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) of Iraq Since the Arab Spring," Nathaniel Handy focuses on the establishment of a strong partnership between Turkey and the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq in the post-2011 period, arguing that pragmatic interests of both polities—at the moment—far outweigh their differences of opinion over the future boundaries of a "Kurdish homeland." The penultimate contribution in the volume, Şeref Kavak's "The Arab Spring and the Emergence of a New Kurdish Polity in Syria," conceptualizes the so-called Kurdish Spring as an alternative sociopolitical model that aims to challenge the nation-state-oriented Sykes–Picot order in the region via the rise of autonomous Kurdish polities in northern Syria and Iraq while also studying the trajectory of the Kurdish political movement in Turkey. Finally, Hüseyin Işıksal's *Conclusion* collectively reflects on the arguments of all contributions, highlights the shared ideas that bind them all, and concludes the book with a brief discussion on potential avenues of future research on the subject.

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Part I
The Turkish Model and the Arab Spring

Chapter 2
Turkish Foreign Policy, the Arab Spring, and the Syrian Crisis: One Step Forward, Two Steps Back

Hüseyin Işıksal

When the "Arab Spring" struck the Middle East in 2011, the initial perceptions of Turkish foreign policy-makers were predominantly positive. Turkey, under the rule of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*—hereafter AKP), appeared to support any changes that emanate from the "people level" across the region. As the party had already been victorious in three consecutive parliamentary elections, with mass popular support in its own country, supporting "people" in their struggle against authoritarian regimes was a consistent and reasonable policy at the onset of the Arab Spring.

Considering the realities and limits of the established regional system in the Middle East, where citizens are subordinate to their autocratic and mostly pro-Western regimes, the AKP's support for Arab Spring revolutions has another important implication. One of the principal reasons behind the AKP's approval of the early phases of these revolutions was that the strongest opposition movement within the Arab world is formed of Islamist groups. Political and diplomatic support for emerging Islamist governments fostered the AKP's popularity among its supporters, both domestically and internationally.

Nevertheless, when the Arab Spring began to impact Turkey via the conflict in Syria, the "Arab Spring" gradually transformed into the "Turkish Autumn." The cost of the Syrian crisis further increased with the emergence of the so-called "Islamist State" in Iraq and Syria (hereafter ISIS) and the revival of the Kurdistan Workers' Party's (*Partiya Karkeran Kurdistan*—hereafter PKK) terrorist activities. These developments also highlighted the long-standing dilemmas inherent in the Turkish foreign policy toward the Middle East: Turkey's Kurdish issue and the country's Sunni-oriented foreign policy.

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Deriving from these preliminary remarks, this study analyzes Turkish foreign policy during the AKP era in relation to the Arab Spring revolutions and the Syrian conflict. Initially, the established status quo in the Middle East is analyzed by identifying its principal sources of power. The discussion regarding the role of Arab Spring as a challenge to the regional status quo completes the first section.

Furthermore, the main pillars of AKP's foreign policy are briefly elucidated and underlined. This benefits the rest of the study by presenting the consistent and inconsistent patterns of Turkish foreign policy during the AKP era. The final part discusses how the Arab Spring developed in to the "Turkish Autumn" when the waves of uprisings reached Syria. The failure of Turkish foreign policy became particularly visible in Turkey's opposition against Bashar al-Assad's regime. Consequently, it is postulated that, although Turkish foreign policy achieved some remarkable results in Northern Iraq, which can be regarded as a positive step forward, Turkey took two steps back with its contradictory policies in Syria.

Established Status Quo in the Middle East and the Arab Spring

Before analyzing Turkish foreign policy, the Arab Spring, and the contemporary Syrian crisis, it is helpful to briefly examine the causes and implications of the legitimacy problem within the Arab world. The legitimacy problem and the established status quo still remain at the very core of contemporary political crises in the region. The political structure that was tailored by Western colonial powers in the post-World War II era did not perfectly "fit" Middle Eastern realities. The inevitable consequence of the artificial borders and problematic state formation process in the Arab Middle East constitutes an acute legitimacy problem, which can simply be defined as the "rightfulness" of the rule of the ruler according to his/her subjects. In modern democracies, the only acceptable form of a ruler's legitimacy is derived from the consent of the people, which is predominantly represented by free and fair elections. However, in the Arab Middle East, leaders are inclined to replace democratic modes of legitimacy with alternatives.[1]

It is commonly acknowledged that Middle East has been divided into various nation states without any concern for the established tribal, ethnic, and religious divides of the region. As stated by Hossein Razi (1990, p. 82), the territories of states in the Middle East were created according to the needs and perceived interests of European powers, rather than those of local populations. In the same vein, Mohammed Ayoob (1993, p. 34) argues that political boundaries in the Middle East were drawn to best serve the purposes of colonial convenience or intraimperial trade-offs. As a consequence, the majority of local populations in the

[1]For a detailed study of how Arab leaders have developed strategies to substitute democratic means of legitimacy with alternatives, see Hudson (1998).

Middle East were left with no sense of "state-based loyalty," simply because Arab societies' tribal, ethnic, and sectarian loyalties impeded the moral justifications of newly established states. Inevitably, Arab regimes are institutionally weak, divided in an ethnic and sectarian sense, lack political legitimacy, and are bounded with authoritarian structures of government that do not tolerate any kind of political opposition. In this context, they become vulnerable to challenging ideologies and powers that destabilize the regional order and status quo.

Approaching from the security perspective, and again because of the legitimacy problem, many Arab regimes have become reliant on external support for their survival. In other words, for the sake of internal security, the Arab regimes jeopardize their autonomy and seek external alliances. As such, Malik Mufti (1996, p. 4) states that there is a direct relationship between the stability of a regime and the search for stronger alliances within or beyond the region. In other words, more legitimate regimes are less concerned with searching for external military, economic, and political alliances and assistance that further increase their dependencies on extra-regional countries.

Looking from the other side of the spectrum, the democracy concerns of local populations are generally not the concerns or political priorities of extra-regional powers, unless the authoritarian regimes' policies clash with their own interests. In this respect, a strong status quo has been formed in the Middle East that has proven very hard to break. The status quo was formed and supported by both the powerful extra-regional powers and the established local collaborators, who are in control of their local populations.

This status quo not only refers to the strong political and economic establishments. There are also sociocultural and text knowledge dimensions. For instance, one of the repeated mistakes made in Middle Eastern international relations literature is the underrating of the mass-rooted revolts. This is predominantly due to the power and influence of the "Orientalist approach" in Middle Eastern studies. Orientalism demonstrates the linkage between thought and institutions of power, as it is interrelated with society, history, textuality, and politics.[2] The Orientalist discourse fundamentally suggests the "peculiarity" of the Arab Middle East in terms of state formation, cultural, and religious aspects. This peculiarity, however, is used in a negative sense, since the whole concept of the Arab values and traditions is viewed as ineffective and inferior compared to Western cultural elements. The Middle Eastern Islamic civilization is defined as a religious, feudal, undeveloped, violent, and irrational system that lacks the necessary characteristics that have led to progress in Europe (Owen 1973, p. 293).

It is undeniable that Orientalist perceptions have so far influenced the majority of studies and policies related to Middle East. Edward Said's revolutionary contribution successfully exposed the linkages between interests of diplomatic circles, large

[2]For a comprehensive analysis of Orientalist discourses, see Said (1978), Amin (1989), Halliday (1996), Sharabi (1990), and Owen (1973).

corporations, and the academic triangle.[3] As noted by Said, Orientalist discourses serve as a means of justifying Western political and military interventions in the Middle East. Therefore, it is not a coincidence that most influential actors in the international system finance and politically support the Orientalist discourse. Orientalist understandings have hindered and undervalued the regional challenges against the Western-led regional status quo in the region. Pro-Western regimes are portrayed as successful regimes that are fully supported by their people, while their challengers are described as "violent," "Islamist terrorists," "radical," or "dangerous." The role of Orientalism on the subordination of the region is constant since the Orient was constructed as a fixed identity with a timeless essentialism.

Even in contemporary times, neo-Orientalists have suggested that "timeless essentialism" remains within the Arab world. This is revealed as an insecurity of the boundaries, cruelty, terrorism, rejection of modernization and democratic principles, backwardness, organizational weaknesses, laziness, or ignorance. Even the presumed acceptance of the status quo and authoritarianism in the Middle East are presented as intrinsic characteristics of the Arab Middle Eastern culture by Orientalist approaches. The Orientalist discourse has tended to ignore the negative implications of the state formation and artificial boundaries in the Middle East along with the role of external powers. Instead, it equalized the insecurity in the region, conflict, terrorism, and all the aforementioned negative attributions as inherent parts of Arab culture and/or Islamic religion.

In this vein, although Arab societies have frequently revolted against the established order throughout history, these revolts did not attract the required level of attention in the scholarly literature. The Yazidi, Assyrian, and Shi'a revolts in Iraq between the 1920s and 1940s, the Kurdish revolts in Iraq since the 1930s, the Ikhwan Revolt in what is now Saudi Arabia between 1927 and 1930, the National Front revolts in favor of Mosaddegh in Iran in 1952, Nasser's pan-Arabist challenge in the region during the 1950s and 1960s, the Iraqi Revolution and overthrow of the pro-Western Nuri al-Said regime and the Hashemite Monarchy of King Faisal in 1958, the pan-Arabist revolts in Jordan in the late 1950s, and the "Black September" of 1970 in Jordan can all be evaluated as examples of these revolts, among many others. Most of these challenges to the West-centric regional order were not only underrated, but systemic attempts were made to marginalize, forget, exclude, or bury them in history in order to legitimize the present. After all, "truth" and power are mutually produced and sustained according to the interests of domestic and influential international actors of the Middle East. All these revolts were instigated against the established status quo in the Middle East. In other words, they were against Western powers and their local allied regimes in the region. These revolts did not achieve the required attention within the international relations literature mainly because of the dominancy of the Orientalist discourse that aims to portray the Western-allied regimes of the region (e.g., Saudi Arabia and Egypt) as legitimate entities.

[3] For more details, see Said (1978).

The most recent and significant revolt in this vein is the Arab Spring. The Arab Spring can basically be defined as demonstrations and rebellions of Arab people against their autocratic leaders' rule, corruption, human rights violations, and poor economic performance. The protests were initiated in Tunisia in December 2010 and then rapidly diffused throughout the Arab world. As a consequence, revolutions were witnessed in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, where the presidents of these three countries were overthrown. Additionally, major uprisings occurred in Bahrain, Yemen, Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia and minor demonstrations in almost all the other Arab countries. Due to space constraints, the causes of Arab Spring are not evaluated in depth in this study. Nevertheless, the Arab Spring arguably demonstrated that, despite the Westphalian sovereignty principles, the Arab world is interwoven by strong bonds, where transnational Arabism exists at the grassroots level. As such, Jerold Green (1997, p. 245) argues that "despite the growth over time of individual nationalisms, transnationalism remains an important element in popular political consciousness" in the Middle East. The revolts also demonstrated that even the established status quo could come under threat if Arab masses become increasingly skeptical about their elites' ability to govern.

There is no doubt that the Orientalist discourse, which tries to portray effective regime-people cohesion for pro-Western regimes in the Middle East, was stunned by the Arab Spring. The Orientalist discourse could not explain such political dynamism in a region hitherto imagined as "backward," "irrational," "lazy," and "cowardly" societies that supposedly lack any organizational skills. A factor that has proven even more detrimental to the legitimacy of the Orientalist discourse is the collapse of pro-Western regimes in the region. For instance, Ben Ali, who was removed from power by the Jasmine Revolution in January 2011, ruled Tunisia for 24 years in accordance with pro-Western foreign policy. Similarly, the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak, who had ruled over Egypt for almost 30 years, was the most serious threat for the regionally established status quo. Egypt is the only Arab state that was actively involved in all the Arab-Israeli Wars (1948 Palestine War, 1956 Suez Canal War, 1967 Six-Day War, and 1973 Yom Kippur War). More importantly, Egypt was the vanguard and leading country in the Arab world during the Gamal Abdel Nasser era, which significantly challenged the Western-established status quo in the Middle East.[4] Following the death of Nasser in 1970, Western powers, under US leadership, vigorously worked to add Egypt into the pro-Western camp. These attempts achieved positive results with the signing of Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel on September 17, 1978. This treaty, which made Egypt the first Arab country that recognized Israel, resulted in the isolation of Egypt from the rest of the Arab world (Hinnebusch 2002, p. 119). In 1978, Egypt was expelled from the Arab League, and the headquarters of the Arab League were

[4]Gamal Abdel Nasser challenged the Western-established status quo in the region via his standing against and key role on the collapse of the Baghdad Pact, the arms deal with the Soviet Union that broke the Western countries' weapons monopoly in the region, the nationalization of the Suez Canal, the establishment of the United Arab Republic (UAR) between Egypt and Syria, and Nasser's role and assistance on Qaddafi's Libyan revolution.

relocated from Cairo to Tunis, Tunisia (Diab 1991, p. 28). Furthermore, the pro-Western Egyptian President Anwar Sadat was assassinated on October 6, 1981, as a consequence of Camp David Accords which was seen by anti-Israeli groups within Egypt as "treason." Against these handicaps, the Western world provided maximum political, diplomatic, military, and economic support to Egypt in order to keep the country within pro-Western lines. This has made Egypt the country that has received the second largest amount of US economic aid in the world after only Israel (*Mondoweiss* 2015). Therefore, the 2011 revolution in Egypt was a significant tragedy for the Orientalist discourse and its supporters because it meant that the "star child" of pro-Western regimes in the region had collapsed under public pressure.

Turkey's "People-Based" Initiative: Neo-Ottomanism and Zero Problems with Neighbors Policy

Although the end of the Cold War era created opportunities for policy-making, Turkey was not able to diversify its policies under coalition government throughout most of the 1990s. As the first single-party government in Turkey since 1991, the AKP policy-makers aimed to test the limits of traditional Turkish foreign policy. The main pillars of Turkish foreign policy before the AKP government were based upon the principles of "Westernization," "balance of power," and status quo. These principles were no longer responding to the needs and ambitions of modern Turkey in the twenty-first century. For instance, the growth of Turkish economy has made the country the 18th largest nominal gross domestic product (GDP) and 15th largest GDP country in the world (*World Bank* 2014).

Building upon a growing national economy, Turkey could develop considerable "soft power" capabilities as an effective foreign policy tool (Işıksal 2015, p. 15). As the strongest economy in the Middle East, Turkey intended to use its soft power effectively in a similar manner to Western countries. In this sense, Turkey has comparative advantages over global powers that could make the country more than just an economic power in the region. Turkey's geostrategic location, its historical roots in the area, and its religious and cultural bonds provide it with more opportunities than any extra-regional power. Furthermore, both the acute and the newly emerging problems in Turkey's neighborhood require more proactive and rhythmic foreign policy objectives. Hence, Turkey desired to have greater voice and power in her neighborhood.

In order to achieve these objectives, a new foreign policy initiative was necessary. Although it has not officially been named as such by AKP policy-makers, Turkey's new foreign policy has been defined as "neo-Ottomanism" by many observers. The main argument of neo-Ottomanism is that former Ottoman provinces in North Africa and the Middle East have long been ignored by Ankara after the foundation of the modern Republic in 1923 (Işıksal 2015, p. 24). Both the

Ottoman past and the Middle Eastern cultural heritage have been denied. As a consequence, unlike other ex-colonial powers, Turkey has failed to develop political, economic, and cultural relations with the states of the former Ottoman Empire, even though the country has actually deep historical, cultural, and religious bonds with them.

The neo-Ottoman foreign policy understanding is based on three pillars. The first pillar is the "indivisibility of security." This is fundamentally based on Kantian cosmopolitanism principle, which states that a country's national security cannot be ensured at the expense of that of other countries. In other words, a country could only be considered secure if its neighbors are also secure. In this context, Turkish policy-makers aimed to promote the concept of collective security in Turkey's problematic neighborhood, particularly in Iraq and Syria, particularly in the context of the problematic Kurdish issue.

The second pillar is economic interdependence. This pillar has two dimensions. As mentioned above, Turkey first aimed to use its soft power as an effective foreign policy tool. Secondly, economic interdependence is important for building sustainable peace in the region. As liberal scholars have widely emphasized, economic interdependence plays a key role in eradicating identity-related problems. In other words, economic interdependence is a key factor in breaking down the conflict-ridden identity-related commitments and transfers people's loyalty toward a more economic-oriented order.

The last pillar is cultural harmony, mutual dialogue, and respect. This pillar is significant as it involves recognizing and respecting the political differences that are at the core of many regional problems. This foreign policy initiative proposes that all issues and problems in the region should be resolved through diplomacy and political dialogue. In particular, through emphasizing the role of Islam as the common denominator in the region, it is envisaged that regional problems could be solved without difficulty, including Turkey's Kurdish problem.

Therefore, neo-Ottomanism promoted the idea that Turkey should play a greater role in the Middle East. This could be achieved through integration in economics, society, and politics that will strengthen Turkey's position for further activities. This new policy is not only viewed as a necessity or a strategic goal, but it is also believed that Turkey's historical role in the region could make the country the natural leader (Davutoğlu 2012, p. 1). In other words, the AKP policy-makers firmly believed that Turkey has comparative advantages as it could assume such a rule without significant effort. In this way, it is assumed that neo-Ottomanism offers Turkey the opportunity to be revaluated in the eyes of Western countries by re-demonstrating the geostrategic significance of the country (Raptopoulos 2004, p. 5). At this point, it is important to note that neo-Ottomanism does not call for Turkish imperialism or dominance in the Middle East. Some critics have misperceived this principle as meaning Turkey's desire to revive its control over ex-Ottoman Empire territories.

The most important aspect of Turkey's neo-Ottomanism initiative was its zero problems with neighbors policy. For the effective realization of neo-Ottomanism, this policy was defined as the most important goal of a Turkey that aspires to be a

strategic country (Murinson 2012, p. 19). Turkey's relations with her neighbors have always been problematic over the years due to different reasons. For instance, Turkey has ideological problems with Iran, genocide claim problems with Armenia, and the PKK and river control problems with Iraq and Syria. Therefore, Turkish policy-makers observed that a new approach was required for relations with neighboring countries in order to create a new political climate that would be amenable for a solution to common problems. In this respect, the zero problems' policy offers a peaceful settlement of disputes through effective use of diplomacy and international negotiation mechanisms. It initially aims to "normalize" foreign relations with neighboring countries and then seeks to develop relations through constructive initiatives based upon political, economic, and sociocultural relations (Ulutaş 2010, p. 1).

As the initial step for the practical implication of this policy, Turkey actively worked on dealing with Iran's nuclear program and acted as an effective mediator for a peaceful solution to the dispute. During the period of AKP rule, Iran became the second biggest energy supplier for Turkey after Russia. In the same vein, in another neighboring country, Iraq, Turkey played a conciliatory role between Sunni and Shi'a groups in order to encourage their participation to parliamentary elections. Sunni groups had previously boycotted the referendum on the new Iraqi constitution.

Turkey also applied an effective strategy toward Syria. Turkey and Syria had experienced major difficulties for many years. It is undeniable that terrorism has been the foremost threat to Turkey's security since 1984, when the PKK committed its first terrorist attack in Turkey. During the Hafez Assad era, Syria became a safe haven for the PKK. Previously, the Assad regime had also accommodated the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) that assassinated Turkish diplomats in many locations around the world. Another major concern between the two countries was the use of water resources from the Euphrates River. On many occasions, Syria has accused Turkey of blocking the flow of water to the northern region of Syria (Çakmak 2016, p. 5).

Following the zero problems with neighbors policy, the relationship between two countries developed considerably. Syria ceased its policy of accommodating the PKK within Syrian territory, the water problem was resolved to a large extent, and Syria officially recognized the Turkish province of Hatay, which it had previously claimed was within Syrian territory. On the other hand, both countries signed many trade agreements, and Turkey's foreign trade with Syria surpassed $400 million per year between 2006 and 2011 (*Hürriyet* 2014). The tourism activity between the two countries also rose by an average of 3% per annum until 2011 (*Sabah* 2016). Turkey even waived the visa requirement with Syria in 2009.

Without any doubt, the most effective result of the zero problems with neighbors policy was achieved with the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG). Turkey had always been anxious about any form of Kurdish autonomy in Iraq. This anxiety was driven by the fear that the region could become a strong and permanent PKK base and an autonomous Kurdish state could then claim territory from Turkey. Nevertheless, in the post-Saddam era, the AKP government discovered that the Iraqi

Kurdish region offered promising prospects for satisfying both domestic and foreign policy objectives. These objectives varied from creating enterprises for Turkish companies to constructing direct pipelines to Turkey and to increasing the strategic assets of Turkey in the eyes of the Western world, in order to solve the domestic Kurdish problem and to counterbalance the Iranian influence over Baghdad.

In order to reach these objectives, the AKP government encouraged Turkish corporations to enter into the KRG market. As a result, the economic relationship between the two countries has taken a sharp upward trajectory since 2010. Currently, the economic sector and investments in the KRG are extensively in the hands of Turkish companies. Turkey is the KRG's main business partner, where 55% of foreign companies are Turkish (Boyer and Katulis 2008, p. 14). More than 50,000 Turkish workers are working in the KRG, and it is estimated that several hundred thousand people in Turkey are benefitting from their remittances (Jenkins 2008, p. 18). As a consequence, Turkey's trade volume with the KRG has risen to $8 billion per year since 2010 (Al-Sharikh 2011, p. 114). Therefore, it could be argued that Turkey dominates the economy of the KRG, as an estimated 80 percent of the region's imports come from Turkey (Boyer and Katulis 2008, p. 14). As such, Turkey entered into economic cooperation with the KRG, which was previously an unthinkable strategy. In May 2012, the two sides even made an agreement that would directly transfer Kurdish oil and gas to Turkey. This move further combined the political destinies of the two actors.

The main driving force behind the AKP's new foreign policy is a "people"-based political initiative. This perception is simply based on "soft power" tools and aims to break state-based boundaries and reach people in surrounding countries, particularly from an economic perspective. In other words, people-based initiatives have the intention of destroying the bureaucratic barriers between Turkey and its neighboring countries, meaning that Turkey could benefit both economically and politically and consolidate itself as a major regional power in the region. The Arab Spring offered promising opportunities for the achievement of the aforementioned foreign policy objectives for Turkey, at least in theory.

It is worth stressing that almost all free elections within the Arab World won by Islamist parties are generally regarded as "reactionary" by the Western world. For instance, the Islamist party (Front of Islamic Salvation—FIS) won the first democratic elections in the Arab World held in Algeria in December 1991 with a clear victory (56%). The FIS achieved this through an aggressive Islamic campaign (Tlemçani 1990). Hezbollah's repeated election victories in Lebanon and Hamas' electoral victories in Palestine could also be approached from the same perspective. The Arab Spring uprisings further bolstered this trend.

In the post-2011 period, the Muslim Brotherhood won electoral victories in the Egyptian parliamentary elections of 2011–2012. The leader of the Islamist Freedom and Justice Party, Mohamed Morsi, was chosen as the fifth Egyptian President in the 2012 Egyptian Presidential Election. Similarly, the Islamist Bloc that was led by the Salafist Al-Nour Party came second in the 2011–2012 Egyptian elections with 28% of the votes. Another Islamist party, the Ennahda Movement, won the 2011

Tunisian Constituent Assembly elections with 40% of the vote, which was the first fair and democratic election in the country's history. All these results were welcomed by the AKP policy-makers. The victories achieved by Islamist parties were perceived as the breaking down of the Western-inspired status quo in the region. In other words, considering the legitimacy and cohesion problem between the Arab regimes and their people, the Arab Spring was seen as an opportunity for further cooperation in economic and political spheres between the new democratically elected regimes and Turkey. Furthermore, supporting "people" against their autocratic regimes was a consistent and reasonable policy, since it was also promoting the AKP's popularity among its supporters at home and in the region.

From the "Arab Spring" to the "Turkish Autumn"

As mentioned above, the Arab Spring impacted on pro-Western regimes in the region. Following the initial shock, the Orientalist discourse and Western powers' policies in the region responded with the construction of a new status quo. For this purpose, the Arab Spring was canalized to overthrow the two remaining anti-Western regimes in the Middle East: Libya and Syria. Since assuming political power in 1969, Libyan Leader Muammar Gaddafi had pursued anti-Western policies. Gaddafi's principal foreign policy objectives were pan-Arabism, support for Palestinians, and the elimination of Western influence, particularly in the Middle East and Africa. For these purposes, Gaddafi militarily and financially supported many rebel groups fighting against Israel and Western interests (Tucker 2010, p. 741). Gaddafi also promoted the use of oil embargoes as a political weapon in order to prevent Western countries from supporting Israel. When the waves of Arab Spring finally reached Libya in February 2011, Western powers such as the USA, Britain, and France enthusiastically supported the anti-regime opposition. In order to secure victory for opposition forces, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1973 that mandated a no-fly zone over Libya. Two days later, with the operation called "Odyssey Dawn," the US-led military coalition initiated an attack against Libyan government forces, resulting in the collapse of the Qaddafi regime in June 2011.

On the other hand, Syria remained as the main confrontational state against Israel in the region. As the Arab country that had fought against Israel in three wars (1948 Palestine War, 1967 Six-Day War, and 1973 Yom Kippur War), a peace treaty had still not been signed between Israel and Syria. More importantly, the strategic Golan Heights, which is an area rich in water resources, still remains under Israeli occupation. Israel occupied the area during the Six-Day War in 1967 and annexed the region in 1981. However, the international community has continued to recognize the area as Syrian territory since the UN Security Council Resolution 242 declared that the Golan Heights was illegally occupied by Israel. Furthermore, the Assad regime is a long-standing and key strategic ally to Russia and Iran—two major anti-Western powers. Therefore, the USA and its Western allies desired a

regime change in Syria in order to weaken the global anti-Western bloc and to enhance Israel's national security.

It is evident that the Iran-Syria alliance undermines the US and Israel's interests in the region. Iran has been a political and military supporter of both Hezbollah and Hamas in regional conflicts against Israel. In order to overthrow the Assad regime, oil-rich Gulf dynasties that are allies of the USA (Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Qatar) have sponsored the Sunni opposition. In contrast, the so-called Shi'a Crescent (which consists of Iran, the central government of Iraq, and Lebanon's Hezbollah) has supported the Assad regime. In other words, the Syrian conflict could be viewed through the framework of a Sunni-Shi'a proxy war in the Middle East. In the broader sense, it could be also defined as the extension of the Saudi Arabia—Iranian Cold War rivalry that has never resulted in a direct military confrontation so far. Instead of a direct conflict, the rivalry reflects on the domestic politics of neighboring states through sponsoring of armed proxy groups such as Hezbollah.

A neglected aspect of the ongoing Syrian conflict is the hydrocarbon resource issue. Syria is a strategic country that is situated on the transfer route of hydrocarbon resources in the region. The Iran-Iraq-Syria pipeline agreement that would bypass Turkey and other Sunni states in the region was signed in July 2012 when the Syrian conflict reached Damascus and Aleppo. On the other hand, Sunnis also have an alternative route against this pipeline. The country is already part of a Western-ordained gas pipeline that spans from Egypt to Syria. Qatar plans to construct a new pipeline through Syria that is also known as the "Arab Gas Pipeline," which would link the Qatari gas to Turkey, and through Turkey, it could also be piped to Europe. This Saudi Arabia and Qatar incentive gas line is also supported by the European Union and the USA.

Approaching from Turkey's perspective, as mentioned above, in accordance with the "zero problems with its neighbors" policy, Turkey implemented an effective strategy toward Syria. The relationships between the two countries developed considerably, particularly on historically problematic areas, until 2011. However, the relationship between Turkey and Syria changed dramatically after the Arab Spring and the beginning of the civil war in Syria. When the Syrian crisis erupted in March 2011, Turkey urged Syria to not use asymmetric force against the opposition and to expedite the democratization process, which Assad refused to accept. The relationship between the two countries severely deteriorated after the downing of the Turkish F-4 aircraft by the Syrian armed forces in June 2012. Another incident occurred in October 2012, when a Syrian artillery shell struck Turkey, causing five civilian casualties. As a response, the Turkish army immediately retaliated by incessantly bombarding Syrian military positions for five consecutive days (*The Guardian* 2012).

Consequently, Turkey became a committed supporter of the Sunni camp in regional affairs, even though this was not exactly Turkey's war. The sectarian favoritism toward the Sunnis formed the basis of Turkey's perception of the Assad regime, in line with the Syrian Sunnis' long-held view. This view perceived the Assad regime as an illegitimate minority rule that had seized power by armed

forces and had been imposing harsh measures against the Sunni majority since 1970, when Assad's father, Bashar al-Assad, assumed power after a military coup (Fildiş 2012, p. 148). Therefore, according to Turkish perception, the oppressive al-Assad regime should be replaced with a friendlier Sunni-dominated regime. There is also an economic dimension to Turkey's choice. By supporting the Sunni camp, Turkish policy-makers also aimed to further secure the rich Sunni Gulf countries' (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman) investments and funds in Turkey. It is estimated that these countries' investments in Turkey could exceed US$200 billion within the next 10 years (*Milliyet Emlak* 2016).

However, Turkey is now trapped in the context of a widely exploited Sunni-Shi'a sectarian war. A Turkish proverb says *evdeki hesap çarşıya uymadı*, which could be translated as "the calculation made at home did not go as planned in the market." In this way, after a successful step forward in Northern Iraq, Turkey took two steps back as a result of failed policies in Syria. Having misread the factors behind the canalization of the second wave of the Arab Spring into Syria, Turkish decision makers failed to calculate how the Syrian conflict could destabilize Turkey itself. The government and the public sphere used the aggression of Assad's regime to justify the Turkish position in Syria. The country that had opposed the military interventions in Iraq and Libya called for an international military intervention in Syria. In so doing, Turkey discarded its fundamental foreign policy principle of zero problems with neighbors. In other words, the dialogue-based, reciprocal benefit-driven principle of "settling problems with peaceful means" has failed its major test and has lost its credibility in other areas. So, how the Turkish foreign policy has failed and what were the main crucial foreign policy miscalculations made in Syria? Arguably, the answer to this question could be examined under five different headings: underestimating the resiliency of the Assad regime, overrating the power of the opposition, the misperception regarding ISIS, the refugee problem, and the emergence of the PYD-PKK on Turkey's southern border.

First, Turkish foreign policy-makers underestimated the resilience of the Assad regime. When the Syrian conflict escalated at the end of 2011, it was anticipated that the Assad regime would quickly collapse within several months. By making this false presumption, not only the domestic but also the regional and international dynamics of the conflict were miscalculated. In terms of domestic politics, as mentioned above, the Assad regime is seen as a minority regime that does not receive popular support from the Sunni majority. However, the resistance of the regime proved that it is not only supported by the Shi'a and Christian groups but also by secular Sunni classes who opt for status quo rather than ISIS rule or any other radical Sunni Islamist-dominated regime.

Turkish decision makers have underrated the role of Iran—which is the most influential state in the region—along with the Shi'a-dominated central state in Iraq and the regional powerhouse Hezbollah in Lebanon. Syria is Iran's most important ally in the region at the state level, while Hezbollah is Iran's most important non-state ally. Hezbollah is not only a strong political power that has seats in the Lebanese Parliament, but it also has a powerful military base. During the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988), Syria was the only Arab state that supported Iran within the Arab

world against all odds. Syria is also a vital and strategic buffer state that separates Iran from its mortal enemy—Israel. Therefore, from the Iranian perspective, Syria cannot be ruled by a hostile Sunni government. If such a scenario transpires, the dangerous Sunni domino effect could first impact on Iraq, with Iran as the next potential target. This explains why both the Iranian Revolutionary Guards and the Hezbollah militia forces are fighting alongside Assad in Syria.

At the international level, the global superpower Russia's support for the Assad regime was also miscalculated by Turkish decision makers. Russia perceives the Assad regime as the most viable regime in Syria. After going unnoticed during the intervention in Libya by the US-led coalition, Russia roused from its period of international activity and gradually proved that the country would not tolerate Western countries' political involvement in her neighborhood. The Russo-Georgian War in 2008 where Russia supported Georgia under Saakashvili leadership against Western countries, the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014 from Ukraine, and the ongoing Donbass War again against Ukraine further highlighted this point. In this context, the beginning of a military conflict in Syria is seen as an American conspiracy by Moscow (Daunt and Ensor 2016). Therefore, when Bashar al-Assad asked for Russian assistance, Putin had no hesitation in acting. In fact, there are numerous reasons that explain why Russia is an ally of Assad.

First, since the Hafez Assad era in the 1970s, a close relationship between the two countries has existed. Russia has been a long-standing and important strategic ally to Syria. In this sense, Syria is a long-term recipient of Russian weapons. In fact, in modern times, Syria has been the most prolific customer of Russian armaments. Moreover, the UN arms embargo to Libya in 2011 cost Russia $4 billion, which further increased the significance of Syria for the Russians (Daunt and Ensor 2016). Therefore, it would not be wrong to argue that supporting the Assad regime is a logical and strategic move for Russia. Secondly, the Assad regime allowed Russia to establish a permanent naval base at the port of Tartus. This is Russia's only remaining naval base in the Middle East and the Mediterranean Sea. This base is also important in its role as a military intelligence listening post and only the Assad regime can guarantee the continued existence of this facility. Therefore, the Assad regime is crucial for Russia to maintain a presence in the strategic Eastern Mediterranean Region. Thirdly, it is estimated that there are over 3000 radical Islamist terrorists from Russia that are fighting in Syria (Weiss 2017). Considering Russia's domestic security problems caused by radical Islamist groups in the Caucasus, Russia cannot tolerate any form of radical Islamist presence in Syria. Under the current political structure, only the Assad regime can prevent this threat. In sum, due to various strategic reasons, it is evident that the Shi'a-Russian block cannot let the Assad regime fail, at all costs. Turkey appears to have underestimated the resiliency of the Assad regime by not taking into account the regional and international allies of Syria.

Secondly, another crucial mistake made by Turkey's decision makers was overestimating the power of the armed opposition in Syria. The so-called Free Syrian Army (hereafter FSA) that is fighting against Assad is poorly organized and is a not a unified force. The FSA was established in 2011 by ex-Syrian armed forces

officers. However, as deserted government soldiers, their numbers have been limited between 1000 and 3500, and they only possessed light weaponry until 2011 (Salam 2011). Furthermore, until 2012, the FSA used guerrilla hit-and-run tactics and did not have the aim of controlling the areas once the conflict was over (Peel 2012). From 2013 onward, jihadist groups became a dominant force within the FSA. Most of the FSA fighters joined the better equipped, financed, and highly motivated radical al-Nusra Front (*The Guardian* 2013). More dramatically, reports of widespread corruption within the FSA emerged, particularly related to the selling of arms that were donated to them. For instance, a high-ranking ISIS commander claimed that the FSA is the largest seller of arms to their group (Hersh 2016). Similar claims have also been made regarding the sale of Saudi Arabian antitank missiles to al-Nusra fighters (Hersh 2016).

Thus, as also commented by Lynch, the FSA is an unorganized armed group lacking ideological unity and central control and has "little ability to formulate or implement a coherent military strategy" (Lynch 2016). Although the group has regained importance since the summer of 2016, when Turkey initiated its military intervention in Syria, the aforementioned problems within the organization have still not been completely resolved. Additionally, Turkey's military support for the FSA has clashed with Russian interests, as well as with the USA who supports the PYD forces in Syria. Moreover, Turkey's support for the FSA and military groups confronting the Syrian government has naturally enraged the Assad regime (*The New York Times* 2011). By following this strategy, Turkey has "burned all bridges" and communication channels with the Syrian government and has completely lost its leverage over Assad.

Thirdly, Turkish decision makers have also underestimated the power of ISIS and the destruction that could be caused by the terrorist group across Turkey itself. The failure to determine a political solution to stop the violence in Syria and to relieve the population's suffering has left a dangerous vacuum filled by the most radical groups. ISIS has become the most prominent exploiter of this environment. Its small but relatively well-armed and equipped military force and its rational war tactics have made ISIS the major opposition force in Syria. The military victories of ISIS in 2014 have also encouraged other extremist jihadist movements to increase their terrorist activities in the country. Strong financial reserves that are derived from oil smuggling, bank robberies, ransom money, and forceful collection of taxes have enabled ISIS to hire new recruits.

When the Syrian government lost control over its territory, ISIS established a stronghold around Turkey's southern border. In other words, instead of the Assad regime, Turkey became a neighbor with ISIS. This development further harmed Turkey, as the armed group was involved in various horrific terrorist attacks in Turkey. For instance, 51 people were killed in Reyhanlı-Hatay in 2013, and 34 people were killed in 2015 in Suruç-Şanlıurfa, both along the Syrian border. ISIS's terrorist activities were not limited with border towns and even reached the major cities in Turkey. In 2015, the deadliest terror attack in Turkey's history resulted in the deaths of 103 civilians in the capital city Ankara. Similarly, 13 people were killed in ISIS' Sultanahmet Square attack in January 2016, and another

39 were killed at a nightclub club shooting on New Year's Eve 2017, both in Turkey's principal city of Istanbul. To summarize, the organization that is widely regarded as the "world's richest terrorist group" (McCoy 2014) posed a more severe threat to Turkey than the Assad regime.

Turkish foreign policy-makers also failed to anticipate the dimension, extent, and the costs of the refugee problem that has been caused by the Syrian conflict. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) report, by the end of 2015, more than five million refugees were forced to flee from Syria and scattered around the world, making them the world's largest refugee population. Additionally, since the conflict began, approximately eight million Syrian refuges have been internally displaced (*UNHCR* 2015). This means the total number of people who have been affected by the Syria crisis is more than any other crisis in history (*UNHCR* 2015). The refugee problem has become a considerable social and economic burden for Turkey. Although the actual number is still unknown, it is estimated that at least three million Syrian refugees are now residing in Turkey (*Turkey Ministry of Interior* 2016) and Turkish authorities have spent more than US $25 billion on these refugees (*UNHCR* 2015). More importantly, these figures are likely to increase every day, because Lebanon has closed the country's borders to Syrian refugees since 2014. Furthermore, although it has not been officially announced, Jordan has also closed the boundaries to Syrian refugees in 2015.

One other underestimation of Turkish policy-makers is the emergence of the PYD-PKK on Turkey's southern border. Most of the 800 km Turkish-Syrian border is inhabited by a Kurdish majority. After the Syrian conflict, an offshoot of the PKK, the Democratic Union Party (hereafter PYD), has controlled this area. With the re-escalation of the fight with the PKK, Turkey is further threatened by and subjected to terrorist attacks coming from the PYD-controlled northern Syria. This development has also further strained the relations between Turkey and the USA. While Turkey considers the PYD as a terrorist group, the USA perceive it as a strategic partner in the fight against ISIS. The cooperation between the PYD and the US forces has intensified over the years. The PYD has secured significant military aid and political support from the USA. The PYD has even enjoyed the privilege of being the official ally of the USA and the KRG's Peshmerga forces in operations against ISIS (Barkey 2015).

As a consequence, Turkey is faced with a dual terrorist threat at home and shares the country's southern border with the PYD and ISIS. Needless to say, that has proved to be a more tragic option for Turkey, instead of sharing the border with the secular and comparatively problem-free Assad regime. In other words, the power vacuum caused by the weakening of the Assad regime has been filled by PYD and ISIS forces, which present a clear and imminent danger for Turkey's security. Furthermore, because of conflicting views regarding the PYD, Turkey endangers its long-term alliance with the USA.

Conclusion

The Turkish foreign policy has been transformed noticeably under the AKP rule since 2002. More importance has been given to historically neglected areas and regions, particularly the neighboring countries and the Middle East. In other words, Turkish foreign policy has tried to be more proactive, more multidimensional, and more assertive regarding its own policy priorities. Principally, with an emphasis on the use of soft power, a more ambitious role has been envisioned for Turkey, making it an active regional and global power. It was discovered that, by using its' soft power, Turkey could pursue an active policy to take advantage of all the existing opportunities (Danforth 2008, p. 90). In this way, the AKP government has added a "strategic perspective" to the Turkish foreign policy that was predominantly based upon Westernization, the balance of power, and the preservation of status quo.

The most visible area of this new and active foreign policy is in the Middle East, where Turkish foreign policy-makers have completely changed the previous foreign policy principles and practices. The international conjecture was also suitable for this policy. The US withdrawal from Iraq and the corresponding decline in its regional influence, the Sunni-Shi'a sectarian divisions, and the initially passive stance of Russia left a power vacuum in the Middle East. In order to fill this vacuum in the region, Turkey promoted "neo-Ottomanism" and "zero problems with neighbors policy" that aimed to enhance Turkey's power in historical Ottoman territories.

Considering the legitimacy and cohesion problem between the Arab regimes and their peoples, the *Arab Spring* revolutions were supported by the AKP. Supporting the "people" against their autocratic regimes was a consistent and reasonable policy. More significantly, the AKP's support for Islamist groups as the strongest opposition movement within the Arab world was a strategic and arguably rational move for future political and economic gains.

Following the initial shock of the Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt, Western powers were able to successfully canalize the Arab Spring toward long-standing anti-Western regimes in the region, namely, against Qaddafi in Libya and al-Assad in Syria. Then, the Arab Spring transformed into the "Turkish Autumn" due to the AKP policy-makers' several crucial mistakes. Turkish decision makers could not envision the power of the regionally established status quo that was formed and supported by strong extra-regional powers with local collaborators. In this context, Turkey could not anticipate how the canalization of the second wave of the Arab Spring revolutions into Syria could damage the political stability in Turkey.

As a result of these fallacies, Turkey lost its role as a mediator in the region. Turkey's one-sided support for Sunni opposition at the expense of Shi'a people has reduced the credibility of the country in the eyes of Shi'a-dominated regimes of Syria and central Iraq and, to a lesser extent, in Iran and Lebanon. More dramatically, as a result of the instability in Syria, ISIS and PKK terrorism has escalated in Turkey. Turkish decision makers failed to calculate that, although Assad used asymmetric violence against his people, this did not change the fact that only he

could maintain political and economic stability in this volatile region. Consequently, after a step forward in Northern Iraq, Turkey took two steps back in Syria—both in terms of domestic instability and foreign policy objectives.

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Chapter 3
Eurocentrism Awakened: The Arab Uprisings and the Search for a "Modern" Middle East

Oğuzhan Göksel

The 2011 Arab uprisings were initially hailed by many observers in the Western world as the harbinger of a "modern" Middle East. Finally, it was believed, the hegemony of corrupt autocrats and the prolonged "dark age" of the Arab world were coming to an end. In the context of this narrative that emerged in the wake of the Arab uprisings, the so-called Turkish model gained popularity as a potential guide for the modernization of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Accordingly, modernization has been defined as *the inevitable path to a liberal democratic, free-market capitalist, and secular society within non-Western settings*. This conceptualization is highly Eurocentric as the contents of modernization are solely limited to the contemporary characteristics of social, economic, and political life in Western Europe and Northern America. Moreover, the possibility that the complex transformation trajectories of non-Western societies may not produce the same outcomes as in the Western experience is completely overlooked.

Middle East studies, more often not, lag behind the realities on the ground. Until the 2011 uprisings, the paradigm of "authoritarian resilience"—i.e., the idea that it was extremely difficult to dislodge the consolidated authoritarian regimes of the region—had completely dominated the scholarly literature (Pace and Cavatorta 2012). Yet, the speedy collapse of the regimes of Ben Ali, Mubarak, Saleh, and Qaddafi rendered the paradigm of authoritarian resilience invalid. Akin to the earlier failure of the literature in comprehending the weaknesses of authoritarianism, much of the Middle East studies have been caught off guard when the 2011 uprisings have not directly translated into consolidated democratic regimes across the region. Once again, academic arguments have been overtaken by the course of events in the MENA region. When the protesters achieved success in Tunis and Cairo, Hamid Dabashi (2012) believed that "the neo-imperialist post-colonial order

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in the MENA was coming to an end" and that we would no longer need to contend with Eurocentrism in Middle East studies. Quite the contrary, the 2011 uprisings have actually awakened the dormant Eurocentric thinking about the MENA once again.

This study criticizes much of the literature on the Arab uprisings, arguing that the excessive enthusiasm shown by Western mainstream media and governments toward the promotion of the Turkish model reveals the limits of their understanding of the complexities of MENA societies and polities. Modernization is actually a highly customizable path whose nature is determined mainly by the contingent socioeconomic and political characteristics of each country. Therefore, in order to develop a generalizable understanding of modernization in the MENA region and beyond, the Eurocentrism of mainstream literature needs to be replaced with more flexible frameworks such as the ones developed in recent years by proponents of *postcolonialism*, *multiple modernities paradigm*, and the *uneven and combined development theory*. These approaches have gained strong footholds in the field of sociology, but political science and international relations (IR) are two closely related fields that are still distinctly Eurocentric and resistant to views from non-Western societies—albeit recent years have witnessed to an emergent literature on non-Western IR and political thought.[1]

The first section briefly surveys the intellectual origins of the concept of Eurocentrism and explains the definition used in this study. This is followed by a study of the perceptions of the so-called Arab Spring by Western governments and mainstream media.[2] Then, the function of the Turkish model narrative in the context of the 2011 Arab uprisings is examined. Finally, the study concludes with a discussion of the various non-Eurocentric approaches in recent years—ultimately suggesting that these conceptual frameworks are more effective and objective than their counterparts in terms of comprehending the MENA region as well as the non-Western world as a whole.

Conceptualizing Eurocentrism

The intellectual origins of the critique of what is now commonly termed "Eurocentrism" and that of its sibling—"Orientalism"—in social sciences can be tracked to the 1960s, an era that witnessed the poststructuralist turn in many disciplines. In the late 1960s, a global leftist and anti-imperialist intellectual movement dominated the academic life of many parts of the world. This movement dedicated itself to

[1]See, for example, Acharya and Buzan (2010), Shilliam (2011), and Voskressenski (2017).

[2]For a detailed study of the Eurocentrism of Western governments and institutions, see Borg (2016), Salt (2012), Azeez (2014), and Hollis (2012). For a detailed study of the Eurocentrism of Western mainstream media outlets such as *The Economist*, *Foreign Affairs*, and *The Guardian*, see Salaita (2012), Shihade et al. (2012), and Malak and Salem (2015).

scrutinizing various aspects of hitherto unquestioned "truths" such as the merits of modernity, the supposed supremacy of the Western civilization over others, and the historical roots of the problem of development in parts of the so-called Third World such as the Middle East, Africa, and South America.[3] Within Middle East studies, Maxime Rodinson (1973) and, of course, Edward Said (1978) have been extremely influential—leaving a lasting legacy centered on a critique of ethnocentric lenses used in the study of the Muslim world. Since the late 1970s, an ever-growing body of literature has targeted Eurocentrism via the conceptual frameworks broadly referred to as *postcolonialism*.[4]

According to Pınar Bilgin (2016, p. 2), Eurocentrism is "a by-product of the colonizer's orientalist gaze towards non-European 'others'" and that it "continues to shape our understanding of world politics through its internalization by myriad actors in 'Europe' and beyond." At its heart, Eurocentrism is based on the "notion that European civilization—'The West'—has had some unique historical advantage, some special quality of race or culture or environment or mind or spirit, which gives this human community a permanent superiority over all other communities, at all times in history and down to the present" (Blaut 1993, p. 1). A crucial component of Eurocentrism is the idea of diffusionism, namely, that modern life historically emerged in Western Europe and that this advanced socioeconomic and political organization would gradually expand outward to the so-called less-developed peripheries (i.e., the non-Western world or the "Rest"). Ultimately, the spread of Western values would supposedly create a unified global civilization modeled on the examples of Western Europe and Northern America.

Though the influence of Eurocentrism is often overlooked or underestimated, it continues to enjoy broad support among the intelligentsia of the Western world. Eurocentric arguments are hardly a rarity as they can be found daily in the "world news" section of almost every major Western newspaper (Azeez 2014; Salaita 2012; Malak and Salem 2015). A key tenet of Eurocentrism is the unquestioning belief in the virtues of Western civilization. It is believed that the Western civilization was the one that gave birth to modernity, and all other civilizations seeking to catch up with the technological, economic, cultural, and military superiority of the West must follow its historical transformation experience step by step. The postcolonial perspective collectively refers to these ideas as "the myth of the Western Miracle" (Amin 2009; Blaut 1993).

The myth of the Western Miracle, as it is commonly understood and promoted, rests upon three pillars: (1) the democratization process whose roots are often traced to the French Revolution in 1789, (2) the economic development process that originates in the transformative power of the early nineteenth-century Industrial

[3]For more details, see Halliday (1993, pp. 148–160) and Lockman (2010).

[4]For notable postcolonial works, see Fanon (1952, 1961), Foucault (1972), Said (1978), Spivak (1985, 1988), Chakrabarty (2000, 2002), and Bhambra (2007). For notable postcolonial works within the Middle East area studies in particular, see Amin (2009, 2016), Dabashi (2012), Ayubi (1995), Prashad (2012), and Lockman (2010).

Revolution, and (3) the social change process that supposedly began with the Protestant Reformation and, subsequently, the Enlightenment (Bhambra 2007). Thus, *modern society* is conceptualized rather exclusively as one that possesses all the prominent features of contemporary Western European and Northern American societies: *liberal democratic*, *secular* (often used interchangeably with *rational*), and *capitalist* (Lambropoulos 1993).

Postcolonial scholars such as Gurminder Bhambra (2007), John Hobson (2012), and J. M. Blaut (1993, pp. 50–151) argue that the myth of the Western Miracle does not reflect reality because the pre-1492[5] Europe did not actually have any unique internal qualities that led to the rise of its modern hegemony. The historic ascendance of Europe was simply the consequence of a shift of dynamism within the trade routes of the global economic system:

> Up until the Renaissance, Europe belonged to a regional tributary system that included Europeans and Arabs, Christians and Muslims. But the greater part of Europe at that time was located at the [economic] periphery of this regional system… From the Renaissance on, the capitalist world system shifts its center toward the shores of the Atlantic, while the Mediterranean region becomes, in turn, the periphery. The new European culture reconstructs itself around a myth. (Amin 2009, p. 103)

The mass exploitation of the material and human resources of the non-Western world via colonialism provided the capital accumulation that subsequently fueled capitalist industrialization in Britain, France, and other parts of the Western world. Moreover, the Muslims contributed to the technological rise of Europe from the sixteenth century onward via passing down their various inventions such as the windmill, the water mill, and efficient irrigation techniques (Hobson 2009, pp. 219–220). However, the historical contributions of the Muslim world or other non-Western civilizations to the rise of modernity are seldom acknowledged. Modernity, as it is argued by Eurocentric observers, is an essentially *Western* construct.

Challenging the myth of the Western Miracle, the postcolonial perspective suggests that modernity should be seen as a product of the complex cultural, economic, and political engagements between Western and non-Western societies rather than being the product of Western Europe's internal development trajectory. According to this understanding, modernity is a *collective good* of the entire humanity. Moreover, what is commonly referred to as "un-development" or "less development" is actually a consequence of the rise of the West. In other words, as European imperialist powers progressed, they devastated the socioeconomic and political structures of others, and, as such, that is why much of the non-Western world is still struggling with the issue of development at the present. The non-Western societies have in fact been systematically "underdeveloped" as long suggested by dependency theorists such as Andre Gunder Frank (1968).

[5]The year the European colonization of the New World began after Christopher Columbus sailed across the Atlantic Ocean in search of a trade route to the East Indies.

Within the Eurocentric literature on modernization and development, it is overlooked that it took a very long and tumultuous journey for the aforementioned "success story" of the West to emerge. The French Revolution, for instance, did not immediately produce a liberal democratic regime and instead led to a tragic episode of murder and mayhem (i.e., the Reign of Terror, 1792–1794) and a regime reversal under Emperor Napoleon I. In fact, a liberal democratic regime could not be established in France until at least a century after the 1789 French Revolution (Shihade et al. 2012). Nor did the Britain-led capitalist Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century immediately provide human development and create a sizable middle class with desirable average living standards. Instead, the Industrial Revolution actually led to uncontrollable urbanization, lawless slums, child labor, and utterly despicable working conditions[6] from mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century—until the labor unions of working classes began to revolt and demand better working conditions across Western countries such as Britain, France, the USA, and Germany. Thus, even when evaluated through the Eurocentric lens of Western European history, one should avoid judging the long-term consequences of non-Western political phenomena such as the 2011 Arab uprisings or claim to have discovered their "true meaning."

Despite the aforementioned troublesome history of Western modernity itself, many Western observers easily dismiss contemporary non-Western societies such as the Arab peoples of the MENA region as "un-modern" or, less impolitely, as "a work in progress." While the so-called Western civilization is often depicted as the "pinnacle of human progress," non-Western societies—and the Muslim world in particular—are perceived as realms of "un-freedom," "un-civilization," or "barbarism" within the confines of a supremacist "us versus them" dichotomy (Hobson 2009, p. 218; Sayyid 1997, p. 158; Borg 2016). In other words, non-Western civilizations such as the Muslim world are placed as the antithesis of the West, the proverbial *yin* (dark side) to the *yang* (light side). This simplistic division of the globe into two as the "civilized Western world" and the "uncivilized non-Western realms" has morally justified Western imperialism by adding it a "civilizing mission" (the so-called White Man's Burden). On the other hand, it has also left the non-Western world in a permanent state of subjugation to the West—as an "eternal periphery" in the words of Immanuel Wallerstein (2004) and Samir Amin (2009).

Eurocentrism is not a singular argument or an idea limited to one particular occasion; it is in fact a systematic way of thinking about the world. Its influence is so far-reaching that it becomes a strong worldview that conditions the understanding of numerous sociopolitical issues by an observer. Moreover, the consolidation of Eurocentric thought patterns in an observer's mind is an extremely subtle process. Once planted in the mind, these thought patterns spread like a virus and form numerous stereotypes that are very resistant to change—even when faced with

[6]Thought-provoking reflections on the social costs of the Industrial Revolution in the Western world can be found in fiction—see, for example, the works of literary giants such as Charles Dickens (1838), Jack London (1903), Upton Sinclair (1927), and George Orwell (1939).

solid evidence that points to the contrary. The main agents that plant Eurocentrism, and reproduce it ad nauseam, are media outlets, national education systems, and cultural products such as movies, television series, and comic books. In addition, these agents are not only limited to the Western world as the mind-set of the intelligentsia of non-Western societies has also been swayed by the global reach of Eurocentrism. The influence of Eurocentrism is subversive to the extent that many studies claiming to be post-Orientalist or postcolonial actually use Eurocentric tropes without even realizing (Malak and Salem 2015). Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that despite all the strong critiques launched by postcolonial scholars over the last few decades, the discursive hegemony of Eurocentrism has proven extremely resilient. As such, the following section of the study examines the interpretations of the 2011 Arab uprisings by the Western mainstream media and governments, showing that Eurocentrism is still "alive and well" today.

Eurocentric Images of the 2011 Arab Uprisings

> Whatever the outcome, it is already clear that Egyptian society as a whole has *evolved*. Despite the ugly clashes of recent days, the change has mostly been peaceful. Egyptians have graphically demonstrated that they will no longer accept the old rules. They are moving. . . *from pharaohism to democracy*. (*The Economist* 2011)

As can be seen in the above segment from *The Economist*'s special issue on the 2011 Arab uprisings, initially, the protests were celebrated in the Western world within an atmosphere of mass euphoria. The uprisings were praised not necessarily because Western observers sympathized with the plight and struggle of Arab masses. Instead, the uprisings were portrayed in a positive light because it was believed that the virtues of Western modernity—with its archetypical package containing democracy, free-market capitalism, and secularism—would now be willingly accepted by a group of non-Western people. The Arab world was finally *modernizing* and supposedly converging toward a single unified humanity remade in the image of contemporary Western societies. The old globalization discourse of the likes of Francis Fukuyama (1992) was perhaps right after all. Maybe no one would ever dare to question the legitimacy and superiority of the Western model of socioeconomic and political organization anymore! Thus, from the earliest days of the 2011 protests onward, the interpretation of this complex socioeconomic and political phenomenon has been imprisoned to the strict confines of a *neoliberal globalization/modernization discourse* (Pace and Cavatorta 2012, pp. 126–129).

A notable assumption that has dominated many analyses on the 2011 uprisings is that the Arab world is in desperate need of modernization:

> These brief examples [from the literature on the uprisings] all show essentialized notions that constitute the Middle East as a war-torn and damned place while hiding neo-imperial Western intervention. It also furthers a neoliberal agenda and simultaneously adopts a racialized idea of Arabs as being savage, at times implicitly or explicitly calling for them to be tamed. (Malak and Salem 2015, p. 94)

Moreover, the only form of modernization is the imitation of the West, i.e., Westernization, as seen in the below narrative commonly utilized by Western mainstream media outlets such as *Foreign Affairs*:

> This tumult, this awakening, is the third of its kind in modern Arab history. The first, a political-cultural renaissance born of a desire to join the modern world, came in the late 1800s. Led by scribes and lawyers, would-be parliamentarians and Christian intellectuals, it sought to reform political life, separate religion from politics, emancipate women, and move past the debris of the Ottoman Empire... The second awakening came in the 1950s... the era of Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt, Habib Bourguiba in Tunisia, and the early leaders of the Baath Party in Iraq and Syria. (Ajami 2012)

Not only the 2011 uprisings are evaluated through the lens of a Eurocentric framework, but the entire history of Arab peoples in the last two centuries is presented as the case of a desperate search for Westernization (Borg 2016, p. 212). Accordingly, the so-called Arab awakening(s) occurs only when the Arab peoples attempt to model their socioeconomic life and political organization on the example of Western countries.

The following are *the keywords* that are most emphasized in Western media reports on the character of the 2011 protestors: "youth," "Twitter and Facebook users," "jokers," "secular lifestyles," and "fluent in foreign languages such as English or French" (Borg 2016, p. 211). All these deliberately chosen descriptions serve to portray the 2011 protestors as *western* as possible. It is striking that the term *modern* is almost exclusively used by Western mainstream media in a positive connotation. For instance, the Arab youth that led the protests were supposedly modern because they use smartphones and social media and share online memes. However, *Daesh* (ISIS), an extremely violent terrorist organization that uses high-technology weaponry and runs elaborate social media averts to recruit members, is never referred to as modern. According to this narrative, then, modern always identifies traits deemed desirable in the eyes of Western observers (Brownlee and Ghiabi 2016, p. 312).

In a detailed study on Eurocentrism in American media, Steven Salaita (2012, p. 144) summarizes the American media tropes about the 2011 uprisings as such: "That Arabs are finally awakening to democracy, that Arabs appreciate (and often seek) the guidance of a fundamentally benevolent United States, that Arabs constantly have to guard against their inherent barbarity (i.e., their natural impulse toward political Islam) and that Arabs have been dormant throughout their history." According to Eurocentric narratives, the taming of the "savage Arab/Islamic beast" is the main function of modernization in the MENA region. The 2011 uprisings are presented as the first step of a profound transformation process that is about to start due to the "constructive impact" of Western modernity via social media and cultural influence (Abourahme and Jayyusi 2011, p. 628). So, rather than showing a genuine interest in the economic development process and/or the libertarian aspirations of the protestors, the 2011 uprisings are solely evaluated as a movement that would *Westernize* the MENA. In this context, it can be argued that the promotion of modernity to the MENA has been an utterly Eurocentric project

concerned with the interests of Western societies rather than that of the Arab peoples (Shihade 2012).

The Western mainstream media exclusively focuses on economic factors as the causes of the mass protests in the streets of the West (e.g., Occupy Wall Street in the USA, the Indignant Movement of Syntagma Square in Greece) (Brownlee and Ghiabi 2016, pp. 309–310). However, the 2011 uprisings of the MENA are depicted as entirely *political* or *cultural* movements demanding democratization and/or secularization. This narrative enables the West to retain the role of a "tutor" to the "student," supposedly responsible for teaching democracy, pluralism, and scientific thinking to non-Western societies. After all, if political protests that demand more freedom also occur in contemporary Western societies such as the USA and Greece, the validity of the Western model would be called into question. Western modernity could then lose its appeal in the eyes of non-Western observers. Therefore, protests are *always political* in the MENA, whereas they are *always economic* in the West!

The understanding of the 2011 protests by Western mainstream media has been characterized by a neoliberal capitalist outlook as democracy is solely equated with "liberal free-market democracy," not with less individualistic and less market-oriented but more egalitarian variants such as *radical democracy*[7] (Malak and Salem 2015, p. 100). In order to paint the 2011 uprisings in a pro-capitalist light, it has been argued that protestors were led by the middle classes (Dabashi 2012). The fallacy of this argument is succinctly pointed by Dabashi (2012, pp. 222–223):

> Thus the middle class. . . are offered as the explanations for a transnational uprising that was catalyzed by a fruit peddler [Mohamed Bouazizi] who set himself on fire out of economic desperation.

In addition, all political actors and movements in the MENA region are evaluated according to the principles of neoliberalism. They are portrayed as "prodemocratic" and in a positive light if they sympathize with free-market economics (Malak and Salem 2015, pp. 93–94). Under the rule of a political affiliate—the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP)—the *Ikhwan* (Muslim Brotherhood) temporarily came to power (from 30 June 2012 to 3 July 2013) after the overthrow of the authoritarian Mubarak regime in Egypt. The *Ikhwan* and the FJP appeared to have committed to free-market economics, and they were depicted by many Western mainstream media outlets as the "progressive force" in Egypt and/or as "moderate Islamists" (Amin 2016, pp. 31–32). In contrast to the FJP, another Islamist movement—the Salafi al-Nour Party—has adopted a largely anti-capitalist program. The anti-democratic vision of the FJP hardly differed from that of the Salafi al-Nour Party, yet the former was seen as "moderate," whereas the latter was referred to as "radical Islamist" by Western media (Amin 2016, pp. 31–32). The difference between the two Islamist parties was not their approach to democracy, but their stances toward free-market capitalism. In

[7]For more details on the conceptualization of radical democracy, see Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) classical text and the works of Tekdemir (2016, 2017).

the eyes of the Western media, then, dedication to free-market capitalism clearly outweighed genuine dedication to democracy.[8]

Islamism is a very broad, ambiguous, and actually an "umbrella" term for any political movement that makes references to Islamic values (Pace and Cavatorta 2012, p. 133). Moreover, the ideology and methods of Islamist political actors such as the *Ikhwan* have radically changed over the decades. Despite the complexity of the subject, however, many observers and much of mainstream Western media (e.g., *The Economist* and *Foreign Affairs*) continue to interpret Islamists via stereotypes or other simplified discourses such as the aforementioned "moderate Islamism" paradigm (Mullin and Pallister-Wilkins 2015, pp. 152–153).

Another highly problematic aspect of various Western narratives on the 2011 uprisings is the overstating of the role of Western cultural influence. It is now widely known that social media outlets such as *Facebook* and *Twitter* contributed to the success of the MENA uprisings via improving the coordination of protestors. Though the authoritarian governments attempted to curtail public access to these internet platforms, it proved extremely difficult to fully supervise global networks based in other parts of the world. Undoubtedly the social media played a key role in the 2011 uprisings; however, this does not justify the Eurocentric reference to social media as a "Western invention" every time its impact on the fall of MENA regimes is mentioned (Brownlee and Ghiabi 2016, p. 310). By constantly reminding us that the social media is a Western invention, the Western mainstream media imply that the MENA societies "owe the Western civilization a debt."

Reading this extremely culturalist narrative, one could almost believe that the social media was deliberately created in Silicon Valley, California, to democratize Middle Eastern societies. A similar culturalist behavior to that would be to underline algebra as an "Islamic invention"[9] or gunpowder as a "Chinese invention" every time they are mentioned. Based on such logic, perhaps it could even be argued that the Chinese civilization highly contributed to the Western colonization of the world because they invented gunpowder! A key indicator of the immense success of Eurocentrism in subtly infiltrating many layers of Western society is that preposterous arguments—such as the one about the Chinese contributing to Western colonization—become *believable* as long as they sustain Western supremacism. Moreover, the inherent illogicalness of such arguments is not even realized until someone feels the need to point to similar supremacist narratives that unnecessarily praise or prioritize other civilizations. Eurocentrism, after all, has been systematically "normalized" by the largely acquiescing Western intelligentsia.[10]

[8]See, for example, Jones (2013) for an archetypical Eurocentric narrative on Islamism in the MENA.

[9]Persian mathematicians, Muhammad ibn al-Khwarizmi and Omer Khayyam, played key roles in the development of the contemporary understanding of algebra.

[10]Nevertheless, in contrast to Western mainstream media and governments, the Western academia has long been dominated by vocal critics of Eurocentrism such as Gayatri Spivak, Noam Chomsky, Homi K. Bhabha, and Dipesh Chakrabarty.

In contrast to narratives that attribute the 2011 uprisings to the supposedly constructive influence of Western modernity, thorough studies of the motivations of the protestors suggest that the social unrest was actually triggered by a growing dissatisfaction with the global political economic order (Lynch 2011; Dadush and Dunne 2011; Abourahme and Jayyusi 2011; Salaita 2012; Salt 2012; Amin 2016). Prior to the 2011 uprisings, Egypt, Tunisia, and Syria had undergone all-encompassing neoliberalization over several decades, a process that massively exacerbated the acute income inequality problem of these societies while consolidating the hold of crony capitalism.[11] The pre-2011 interference of Western-led international organizations (such as the EU) and international financial institutions (such as the IMF and the World Bank) into the MENA affairs through their neoliberal "democracy promotion policies" seems to have helped authoritarian regimes at the expense of the interests of their ordinary citizenry—which was a major source of the anti-Western sentiment of the Arab protestors during the social unrest of 2010–2011 (Hanieh 2013):

> When one analyses the Arab Awakening, it clearly emerged that ordinary citizens rose up against precisely those rigged neo-liberal reforms imposed by Western organizations like the IMF and the World Bank that led to an even more unequal distribution of wealth in their countries and impoverished the masses over the last two decades. . . While the blame for the sorry state of their countries was squarely placed on the shoulders of ruling elites, there is no doubt that there was a significant "economic" element to the uprisings linked to the integration of Arab countries into the world economy. (Pace and Cavatorta 2012, p. 130)

The EU and the USA, in particular, have been heavily accused by Arab protestors of supporting authoritarian regimes and betraying their own democratic principles (Hollis 2012). As such, it can be argued that Western governments actually played a "destructive" role in triggering the 2011 Arab uprisings, rather than possessing a "regenerative" influence over the imagination of the protestors as suggested by many Eurocentric commentaries. In this context, Michelle Pace and Francesco Cavatorta (2012) and Adam Hanieh (2013) argue that the alleged virtues of the neoliberalization of economy are taken for granted by Western governments, international financial institutions, and much of the scholarly literature within Middle East studies. Neoliberalization, which is a key tenet of the Eurocentric globalization discourse, has not created a capitalist class that would lead democratic bourgeois revolutions in the MENA. What it did create instead in Egypt, Syria, and Tunisia is a huge gap between pro-regime capitalist elites and anti-regime lower-income-earning classes that did not reap the benefits of the free-market development (Pace and Cavatorta 2012, p. 129). This accounts for the decision of many working class citizens to join the 2011 Revolt *en masse*.

Thus, the 2011 uprisings constituted an *anti-systemic revolt* that essentially sought to "undermine the established social, political, and plutocratic order" ruled

[11]For a comprehensive study of the role of neoliberalization process in triggering the 2011 uprisings in MENA, see Hanieh (2013). This is a point that is also made in the contribution of Cemal Burak Tansel in this volume.

by the Western powers, their subaltern allied authoritarian regimes, and a comprador bourgeoisie class—that cooperated with both the Western powers and the subaltern authoritarian rulers (Salaita 2012, p. 131; Amin 2016, pp. 7–25; Dadush and Dunne 2011, p. 8; Dabashi 2012). The 2011 protests were actually reminiscent of the 1968 left-wing youth revolts against the political economic status quo in the West and beyond (Malak and Salem 2015, p. 96). When the protests broke out in the winter of 2010–2011 across the MENA, Western governments such as the USA, France, and Britain were at first silent, and they actually defended their authoritarian allies such as Hosni Mubarak and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali as long as possible (Salt 2012, p. 54). In fact, the Western governments never supported the protests against Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, while they applauded the protestors only when their subaltern authoritarian allies were about to collapse Tunis and Cairo (Salaita 2012, pp. 134–138).

Naturally, the 2011 revolt targeted the global political economic system—that disproportionately benefits the West at the expense of the "Rest" (i.e., the non-Western world)—as much as they challenged the authoritarian regimes at the national level. While the search for social justice, dignity, and liberation was the most visible call made in the "Arab street" during the events (Pace and Cavatorta 2012, p. 128; Roy 2012, p. 5; Dadush and Dunne 2011), the 2011 revolt also had a strong anti-Western, anti-Zionist, and anti-imperialist character (Abourahme and Jayyusi 2011). During the protests in Egypt, for instance, the American and Israeli consulates were besieged many times—and not only by Islamists but also by Marxist and nationalist groups (Malak and Salem 2015, p. 95). The "January 25 Revolution Youth Coalition" and many other vanguards of the protests in Egypt refused to meet former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton when she visited Cairo. They indicated that they did not wish to negotiate with "imperialists" and called on Clinton to leave the country (Salt 2012, p. 54). A particularly popular slogan during the 2011 revolt was "national dignity" (*karama al watan*) (Amin 2016, p. 71). The slogan directly reflected the anti-imperialist vision of the protests. It was, in effect, a warning to interventionist Western powers to stay away from the regional affairs of the Arab world.

As explained above, many observers on the ground noted anti-imperialism and anti-Westernism as key motivations for the protestors; however, the 2011 revolt have been framed in an entirely different ideological context by Western mainstream media. Accordingly, the Arab uprisings were led by pro-democratic and pro-capitalist middle classes challenging only their own authoritarian governments (Dabashi 2012; Hanieh 2013; Amin 2016). While the anti-imperialist Marxist protestors and nationalist political movements have been systematically omitted, the numbers of the so-called liberal middle class have been overstated by Western media outlets (such as *The New York Times*, *The Economist*, *Foreign Affairs*, and *The Guardian*) to such extent that a myth has been born (Malak and Salem 2015, p. 96). In reality, the 2011 revolt put forward a strong criticism of global imperialism and capitalism rather than only being a libertarian reaction against the absence of free and fair elections and the lack of shopping malls that would breed capitalist consumerist lifestyles in the region in the manner of the American model.

In the context of the intensive effort to interpret the 2011 revolt through the lens of the globalization thesis, the promotion of the Turkish model as a guide for modernization to the MENA societies is perhaps unsurprising because contemporary Turkey is arguably the most Americanized/Westernized predominantly Muslim society in the region. Akin to the USA and other Western societies, Turkish economy is neoliberal and consumerism oriented, and the country also holds regular elections—though its democratic standards are subject of much debate. Thus, these characteristics alone have automatically qualified Turkish modernization experience as a model in the eyes of many Eurocentric observers in the West and in the region alike. The next section of this study discusses the Turkish model narrative and argues that its promotion by many global and regional actors represents a continuation of the Eurocentric tradition of understanding the MENA societies.

"Civilizing" the Middle East Through the Turkish Model

The Turkish model has been promoted by numerous scholars and commentators—not least by myself in previous publications—as a useful guide for the democratization and development of MENA societies in the wake of the 2011 uprisings (Ülgen 2011; Kayadibi and Birekul 2011; Nafaa 2011; Atasoy 2011; Dede 2011; Kirişçi 2011; Taşpınar 2011; Al-Azm 2011; Göksel 2012, 2013, 2014; Aras and Akarçeşme 2012; Akyol 2012; Bengio 2012; Kubicek 2013). The narratives provided below explain the essence of the Turkish model as understood by most observers:

> Unlike the revolutionary (and to a certain extent violent) Islamist activism that has been very influential in the region, the Turkish model emphasizes a more civil and tolerant connection with Islam... Turkish Islamists have a market-oriented approach where economic success and gains, not pure ideology, are the main driving forces. (Dede 2011, pp. 27–28)

> Turkey's ever-increasing popularity amongst the people of Middle East is likely to turn into a constructive tool in the years to come during the transformation of the Arab countries to democracy. Not only is there a democratic and diverse lifestyle in Turkey, but more importantly Turkey's longstanding democratic institutions will serve as a model and inspiration to many in the region... The establishment of parties modeling the Justice and Development Party [AKP] are concrete examples of a trend that aspires to merge democracy and [capitalist] development with traditional values and identity in the Arab world. (Aras and Akarçeşme 2012, pp. 48–49)

The political context behind the Western promotion of the Turkish model to the MENA is hardly romantic and idealist, because it is actually caused by a pragmatic outlook that is concerned with protecting Western interests as much as possible. A deep fear has emerged among the Western observers during the 2011 revolt: what if anti-Western Islamists—*à la* the Islamic Republic of Iran—come to power after post-authoritarian free elections across the MENA region?

> Europeans consider that Islamic governments are very likely to be set up in the whole region. Their concern is therefore that political Islam in power remains *moderate*, that is, that it dissociates itself from terrorist extremism. The Islamic governments (e.g. the Muslim Brotherhood) would be capable, it is believed in Europe, of controlling their frontiers and thus confining their populations within their own borders and reducing migratory flows. Also, the moderate option is considered to be capable of combining Islam with democracy, along the Turkish model. (Amin 2016, p. 180)

Thus, the potential security challenge that would be posed by the emergence of an "anti-Western belt" across the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean is needed to be quelled with the promotion of Ankara's docile brand of pro-capitalist and pro-Western "moderate Islam" paradigm. Islamism has long been seen as a major threat (Sayyid 1997), and Western fears over its possible rise to power were the reason behind the financial support provided by many Western governments to the secular authoritarian regimes of Ben Ali and Mubarak in the past. In order to "tame" the Islamists, Turkey's incumbent AKP (Justice and Development Party) administration was presented as a positive example combining democracy, free-market capitalism, secularism, and Islamic values (Roy 2012, p. 16; Samaan 2013). It is not a coincidence that the contents of the Turkish model neatly fit with the supposed characteristics of modernity as long imagined by Eurocentric narratives.

The Turkish model narrative fundamentally shaped the ways in which the post-2011 political developments in the MENA region have been perceived in the Western world (Tuğal 2016). While those imagined as less authoritarian, more compromising, and pro-capitalist Islamist political parties (e.g., the Ennahda Movement in Tunisia and the now-defunct *Ikhwan*-affiliated Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt) have been branded as "moderates," those that do not acknowledge the supremacy of the Western-led global political economic order (e.g., the al-Nour Party and various other Salafi groups) have been deemed to be "radical fundamentalists" that are unfit for modern age (Malak and Salem 2015, pp. 96–98). The AKP experience of Turkey has been offered as evidence that Islamist rule could be compatible with Western modernity and, therefore, be seen as legitimate by major global actors such as the USA and the EU (Amin 2016, p. 180; Taşpınar 2014). Thus, the Islamists of the MENA "had to earn the right to be modern" via remaining within the *politically correct* boundaries of the neoliberal globalization discourse, which is bent on creating a unified world society in the Western shape through the transformative powers of democratization, capitalization, and individualization.

The Eurocentric globalization discourse limits the contents of modernity solely to the prominent political, social, and economic features of contemporary Western societies. Therefore, the desire to modernize the post-2011 MENA region via the Turkish model is a continuation of a futile effort to construct a "modern" MENA in the image of the West. Stefan Borg (2016, p. 223) terms this discourse as the "civilizing narrative" and suggests that such Eurocentric narratives establish "Western powers as neo-colonial guardians of the trajectories of the [MENA] uprisings." Eurocentric and Orientalist scholars such as Bernard Lewis (1982)

long believed that the Arab peoples are "passivized subjects" that need to be rescued from their own lethargy by the help of outsiders, i.e., via Westernization.

The concept of the Turkish model is surely more nuanced than earlier narratives over the Middle East such as Lewis', yet it also downplays the self-determination of the Arab peoples and places its faith on the supposed virtues of Western modernity instead. Rather than trying to understand what the post-uprising Arab societies desire for their future or what the 2011 revolt symbolizes for the global political economic order, the Turkish model narrative is based on an unwarranted positive value judgment on the benefits of capitalist development, democratization, secularism, and/or moderate Islam for the "civilization" of the MENA region.

The state of MENA societies after the 2011 revolt is likened by the Turkish model narrative to "a toddler learning to walk" or to "an apprentice learning his/her craft" (Borg 2016, p. 220). Both the Western world and Turkey are seen to be technologically more advanced than the Arab societies, so they supposedly know what the Arab world wants for their future, and all they have ever wanted already exists in the West and Turkey. In other words, the Arab protestors of 2011 simply desired Westernization. In this context, they are depicted as being in need of guidance from a "more advanced" society. The Eurocentric civilizing narrative over the 2011 uprisings acknowledges the difficulty in applying a Western model of modernity to a non-Western context, but the idea of the Turkish model helps to resolve this problem. The idea of following the Western model may potentially be antipathetic to predominantly Muslim Arab audiences, so the Turkish model has been offered instead as a more applicable guide to a Muslim modernity in the MENA. Nevertheless, the outcome the civilizing narrative wishes to achieve—constructing Westernized, secular, democratic, and capitalist societies in the region—by using the Turkish model is identical to the promises of the Western model. The Turkish model has simply been used as a "smoke screen" to subjugate the MENA region to the Western-led global political economic system within a globalization/modernization rhetoric.

Overcoming the Eurocentric Narratives over Turkey and the Middle East

Any attempt at overcoming the strongly established Eurocentric stereotypical narratives over Turkey and the Middle East must start with a deconstruction of the closely related concepts of *modernity*, *modernization*, *development*, and *social change*. Due to constraints of space and the limited focus of this study, it is not possible to comprehensively cover all the perspectives that challenge Eurocentrism in modernization and development studies in recent years. Nevertheless, three schools of thought, in particular, deserve to be acknowledged: (1) postcolonialism, (2) the multiple modernities paradigm (MMP), and (3) the uneven and combined development theory (U&CD). All three have been on the rise in the fields of

political science and IR in recent years, and their efforts can be collectively evaluated as a breakthrough in terms of more objectively studying the non-Western regions of the globe such as the MENA. All three approaches question the validity of the globalization discourse and downgrade the role of the West from that of the "master race or superior civilization" to simply being "one human community" among many other communities across the world.

Surely, all three of the aforementioned approaches diversify within themselves as even when scholars adhere to the same conceptual frameworks; it is not unusual for differences of interpretation to emerge. Yet, this study now proceeds to briefly examine one recently published notable work as a sample for each school of thought: the idea of "connected histories" in Bhambra (2007), Kamran Matin's (2013) version of the "uneven and combined development," and the "multiple modernities paradigm" as presented by Peter Wagner (2012).

Bhambra (2007) suggests that societies around the world, and across time, have always been "different" from each other in terms of their technological capabilities, cultural values, socioeconomic organization, and political institutions. However, as radically different as they are, they also deeply interact with each other in all fields of life. So, all the features that we today term under the label of modernity are products of the complex and "connected histories" of humanity as a whole. It is to be expected that there are different understandings of modern life across the world at the present, and we should avoid placing value judgment on any of them. The alleged superiority of one civilization over others can never be an objective analysis and is doomed to remain trapped to ethnocentric understandings.

Not unlike the idea of connected histories, the U&CD of Matin (2013) refrains from placing any value judgment on being technologically "backward" or "advanced" and instead evaluates these various states of existence as morally relative notions. U&CD rejects deterministic studies of modernization altogether and avoids a priori assumptions about the potential directions socioeconomic and political changes may carry a country. This allows U&CD to avoid Eurocentrism as the possibility that non-Western countries may not simply relive the historical modernization experience of Europe via gradually building liberal democratic, capitalist societies is taken into account. The trajectory of modernization in each society would be determined by its own unpredictable and contingent conditions.

The MMP claims that Westernization is neither inevitable nor the only form of modernity for parts of the non-Western world such as the MENA societies (Wagner 2012). Modernity is reconceptualized as a broader process than Westernization, with Western modernity reduced to "one model among many possible routes." MMP argues that modernized societies may share some characteristics in the structural complexity of their state organization and development levels in economy; however, they do not need to have the same ideological worldview or governance type. Accordingly, all the non-Western country cases constitute *different modernities* as the contingent circumstances of the historical trajectory of each society result in the emergence of a different configuration of economic, political, and social development. Thus, the characteristics of non-Western cases of modernization such as those of Russia, Japan, South Korea, China, Turkey, Iran, and Egypt

may not only differ from the features of Western modernity based on liberal democracy, free-market capitalism, and secularization but may also radically differ from each other.

Conclusion

All the aforementioned perspectives attempt to conceptualize a non-Eurocentric understanding of modernity, modernization, development, and social change. As such, they avoid the biases and ethnocentric narratives of the neoliberal globalization discourse. However, Eurocentrism—as extensively explained in this study—is a strongly established and widely internalized way of thinking about global politics, and its influence over Middle East studies and the study of other non-Western parts of the world will no doubt continue in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, one small step toward ultimately overcoming Eurocentrism is to be aware of the existence of rising non-Eurocentric perspectives in the field and to incorporate these emergent conceptual frameworks to future scholarly studies over the non-Western world.

Seeking to highlight the fallacy of the globalization-oriented Eurocentric narratives over the 2011 Arab uprisings, this study has argued that the excessive enthusiasm shown by Western mainstream media and governments toward the promotion of the Turkish model reveals the limits of their understanding of the complexities of MENA societies. Rather than attempting to understand the complex socioeconomic and political causes of the 2011 uprisings and assess the events in their own right, the phenomenon has been consistently perceived by various commentators through the lens of Western interests and imaginations over the MENA. Hence, most of the analyses that have been produced so far have reflected mostly what the Western world "wishes to see" rather than the true nature of the 2011 uprisings.

This study has argued that the 2011 uprisings in the MENA did not only challenge authoritarianism at the national level but also constituted a broad anti-systemic revolt—in the manner of the 1968 left-wing youth revolts—that posed a significant challenge to the neoliberal market-oriented global modernity designed by Western governments such as the USA. So, Eurocentric narratives such as the interrelated neoliberal globalization thesis and the Turkish model—both of which suggesting that the entire humanity is converging toward a capitalist, liberal democratic, and secular modernity—are not sufficient for truly comprehending the political implications of the vocal unrest that shook the MENA affairs. In order to develop a generalizable understanding of modernization in the MENA region and beyond, the Eurocentrism of mainstream literature needs to be replaced with more flexible frameworks such as the ones developed in recent years by the proponents of postcolonialism, the multiple modernities paradigm, and the uneven and combined development theory.

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Chapter 4
The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Model for the Middle East

Stefano M. Torelli

In the decade between 2002 and 2012, Turkey was often proposed as a model for the Middle East and the broader Muslim world. However, this assumption has come under scrutiny in the aftermath of the "Arab Spring." This is not only due to Turkey's inability to transform the 2011 Arab Uprisings into an opportunity to extend its political influence in the region but also because Ankara has begun to reorient its Middle Eastern policy, characterized above all by a less dynamic attitude from 2011 onward. This is caused, in part, by the emergence of major internal sociopolitical problems (e.g., the 2013 Gezi Park protests) that have distracted Turkey from the Middle Eastern scene. In addition, profound changes within the Arab world itself have also led to a shift in Turkish foreign policy as Turkey could not have possibly remained immune from regional upheavals pressing on its borders (e.g., the Syrian refugee crisis). Nevertheless, any study of the so-called Turkish model should begin with an analysis of the origins and contents of this concept.

In order to effectively address the issue of the Turkish model, this study does not simply focus on short-term factors, and it instead explores the way in which Turkey has acted within Middle Eastern political system over the past decade. After all, Turkish leaders such as former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan noted on various occasions that they did not want Turkey to merely act as a model for Arab countries, but rather as a pivotal actor that would determine the dynamics of regional political system. This foreign policy strategy was constituted at its heart by Davutoğlu's "zero problems with neighbors doctrine," which presupposed a nonhostile and cooperative environment where Turkey would be the pioneer of a new "golden age" of prosperity and peace. Far from representing a cultural model limited to the boundaries of a particular civilization or

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religion, the Turkish model was therefore conceptualized as a universal example of socioeconomic and political development. In this sense, the underlying reasons for the ongoing decline of the Turkish model in the Middle East are to be found not only within changing regional dynamics that have up-ended Ankara's plans. The appeal of the Turkish model has actually weakened because major contradictions have emerged between the utopian promises of the model and the political-economic developments within Turkey itself. Therefore, the focus of this work is not the supposed crisis of political Islam in Egypt or the deterioration of Turkish-Syrian relations. In this context, the government reaction to 2013 Gezi Park protests, Turkey's weakening economic development performance, and the ongoing illiberal political shift via providing more powers to President Erdoğan represent the true litmus tests of a country that presents itself as a successful model.

What Is the Turkish Model?

Debates over the Turkish model in media, academia, and policy-making circles continued for many years, with numerous observers arguing that Turkey could be a potential example for other Middle Eastern countries—especially for Arab countries—by virtue of its supposed achievements in economic development and democratization.[1] However, this argument has always rested on a fundamental deficiency: the ambiguity of or the nonagreement on the meaning of the Turkish model. Most observers interpret the model of Turkey as the "coexistence of a government ruled by an Islamic party (i.e., the AKP) and secular political forces within a pluralistic democratic system." A key element of the Turkish model has been what its proponents perceive as Turkey's post-2002 development success based on neoliberal economic policies. As such the Turkish model has been singled out as a unique experience in the Middle East, one that could possibly be replicated in Arab societies over time.[2]

Today, avowedly Islamic political movements (e.g., the Ennahda Party) exist in many Arab countries (e.g., Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco). It has long been assumed that Islamic parties could obtain parliamentary majorities in many parts of the Arab world—if free and fair elections were held (Göksel 2013). Moreover, many of these countries have been struggling in terms of economic development. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that many commentators have evaluated the AKP experience in Turkey as a model in terms of Islamic moderation, democratization, and development (Kirişçi 2011; Torelli 2012; Göksel 2014). However, this view is characterized by two closely linked misunderstandings: Firstly, such a conceptualization of the Turkish model is extremely static as it does not take into account the complex

[1] See, for example, Aktaş (2011), Ülgen (2011), and Göksel (2013, 2014).

[2] The debate about the Turkish model and its applicability to the Arab world dates back to at least the early 2000s. See, for example, Taşpınar (2003).

structural changes that Turkey has gone through since the 1980s onward. The Turkish model, after all, is the outcome of a specific political and socioeconomic history that has manifested within a certain national context. Secondly, the multi-faceted experience of Turkey as a whole is overlooked, and the Turkish model debate is reduced to the actions of a single political party, namely, the AKP.

The AKP's political model and the Turkish modernization process are strongly linked. The AKP is the result of profound ideological changes the mainstream Turkish Islamic movement (i.e., *Milli Görüş*) has experienced since the 1980s.[3] Turkish political Islam evolved within the strict boundaries of a secular legal-political framework that was hostile toward all manifestations of Islamism in public space. The *Milli Görüş* has had to respond to systemic attempts of marginalization by the Kemalist state structure, the movement finally re-fashioning itself in the social conservative form of the AKP in order to be accepted as a legitimate political actor (Yavuz 2004; Rabasa and Larrabee 2008). As such, the party had to avoid direct references to Islamic values and refrained from publically revealing its Islamic political identity throughout the early 2000s (Kanra 2009, p. 51). Turkish politics has changed dramatically since the AKP first came to power in 2002, and the parameters of Turkish political Islam have been completely altered: Islamic values and conservative classes have now been fully incorporated into the political and economic system of Turkey. Today the main source of political divide in the country is not necessarily the old secular-Islamist identity struggle. The AKP administration and its leader, President Erdoğan, now have staunchly conservative enemies (e.g., the Gülen movement) and many secular allies across the business world and academia.

The current Turkish model is the product of a long period of systemic transformation, and it is extremely problematic—both methodologically and conceptually—to associate it with the realities of contemporary Egypt, Tunisia, or Morocco.[4] The Arab Spring has entirely destabilized the sociopolitical life of many Middle Eastern countries (also triggering ongoing civil wars in Syria, Libya, and Yemen), and it is yet to be seen if any polities resembling that of Turkey would eventually emerge in the region. It is clear that the Turkish model is hardly a useful analytical tool to study the different contexts of Arab countries. Perhaps the model is not applicable to contemporary Middle East because Arab societies are going through a political phase that Turkey had already experienced in the past? If so, the appropriate comparison that could possibly be made between Turkey and the Middle East is not to focus on the AKP model today, but rather to examine Turkey's historical political/economic liberalization process which took place between the early 1980s and the late 1990s (Zürcher 2004, pp. 278–291). Nevertheless, even if

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[3]For a comprehensive study of the evolution of Turkish political Islam over the years, see Yavuz (2005).

[4]Apart from Tunisia, the Arab Spring has so far not been successful in initiating democratization processes in the region. Many such as Egypt, Morocco, and Jordan have witnessed to constitutional changes, yet these have remained largely in the form of "façade reforms" launched only for the purpose of preventing further street protests. For more details, see Biagi (2014).

this is the case, it would still be too early to judge the evolution of the post-Arab Spring countries' political transition now and make a comparison with the case of Turkey.

Tunisia has undertaken dramatic institutional reforms since 2011, and it remains as the only Arab Spring country that has truly experienced meaningful democratic progress. However, even the Tunisian context strongly diverges from the Turkish experience as the political culture of the two countries and the ideologies of their mainstream Islamic movements are dissimilar.[5] Unlike Tunisia, Egypt has quickly reverted back to authoritarianism after a brief democratic transition phase that temporarily brought the *Muslim Brotherhood* to power. Once again the Egyptian Armed Forces—under the leadership of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi—are in charge in Cairo, while members of the Muslim Brotherhood are once again in prison. Not unlike the situation during the successive reigns of Gamal Abdel Nasser and Anwar Sadat, the Brotherhood has been mercilessly repressed and reduced to a clandestine actor of Egyptian sociopolitical life. The successful coup of el-Sisi in July 2013 and the continuing hegemony of Egyptian military in political life strongly contrast with recent developments in Turkish politics. Turkey's own military coup attempt on the fateful night of 15 July 2016 was decisively defeated by the AKP government and hundreds of thousands of protestors. Turkey may have diverged from liberal democratic principles in its governance, yet this shift has occurred under the rule of a civilian and democratically elected party rather than being the result of a military takeover. The continuing military tutelage in Egypt, then, shows how far the contemporary political trajectories of Egypt and Turkey have diverged from each other. Egyptian case ironically resembles the pre-2002 years of Turkey, particularly the 1960–1997 period, which was shaped by a series of military interventions (Battera 2014; Cook 2007). The cases of Tunisia and Egypt clearly exemplify the difficulty of successfully exporting the contemporary Turkish model to Middle Eastern political life.

Turkey's New Middle East Policy: Neo-Ottomanism?

One of the most commonly repeated errors of judgment within the existing literature on the Turkish model is to perceive Turkey's recent activism in the Middle East region as "neo-Ottomanism," namely, as part of an elaborate imperialist strategy supposedly devised by the AKP to unite all predominantly Muslim territories of the region under some sort of Turkish political leadership. This argument has been reproduced in the works of so many observers that it has become a self-replicating force that sustains the debates on the Turkish model.[6] It is true that Turkish foreign policy toward the Middle East has changed under the AKP toward a more assertive

[5]For a detailed comparative study of Tunisian and Turkish political contexts, see Torelli (2012).
[6]For a more exhaustive criticism of this argument, see Taşpınar (2008).

stance. During most of the Cold War, Turkey had instead followed an isolationist approach and avoided Middle Eastern political entanglements (Robins 2003). Since the early 1990s, Turkey has had to revise its strategic priorities and build a network of regional ties as dictated by new realities in the field. Ankara's economic and diplomatic interest to the region actually began during the tenure of President Turgut Özal in the late 1980s, long before the post-2002 AKP rule (Laçiner 2004). What is the force that has pushed Turkey ever-deeper into the complex web of Middle Eastern balance of power since then?

One potential answer to the above question is quite simple: the intensifying globalization wave of our time has created the need to find new customers for the emergent industries of Turkey. It is no coincidence that Turkish interest in Middle Eastern affairs has grown in parallel to the pace of Turkey's economic development program—shaped by a post-1980 transition from import substitution industrialization toward export-oriented open market industrialization. As Turkish capitalist class has searched for new markets, the significance of surrounding regions around Turkey (which also happened to the territorial expansion zone of the former Ottoman Empire in the past) such as the Balkans, Caucasia, and the Middle East and North Africa has increased. Closely linked to Turkey's need for export markets, the other factor that has driven Turkey toward the Middle East has been its increasing energy consumption. As Turkey barely possesses any oil and natural gas resources, ties with energy-rich Middle Eastern economies such as Iran, Iraq, Libya, and Saudi Arabia have become more important than ever. Growing relations with these societies have been shaped by Turkish pragmatism rather than various commonly cited constructivist explanations pointing to the role of Islamic ideology (Calabrese 1998).

Until the tremors of the Arab Spring, a focal point of the new Middle Eastern policy of the AKP government was the Turkish-Syrian alliance. In 1998, Turkey and Syria came very close to war because of several unresolved issues such as the Hatay territorial dispute, Damascus' support for the PKK, and management of the Euphrates water resources (Altunışık and Tür 2006). The conflict was prevented from further escalation on that occasion, and the AKP remained dedicated to building an alliance with Damascus in the 2000s. As such the two countries signed a number of trade, military, and technological cooperation agreements, culminating to the establishment of a strategic partnership in 2009 (Phillips 2009). Turkey massively benefited from positive relations as Damascus provided Ankara privileged access to the Syrian market. This was a fundamental step for Turkey to extend its influence over the Levant and penetrate the heart of the Middle East. In other words, Syria had become Turkey's main access point to the rest of the Arab world. The Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria also benefited from the alliance. During the tenure of President George W. Bush, Damascus was often counted among the so-called rogue states backing terrorism, and it was isolated from international community. Ties with Turkey—a country that was then considered to be a credible and friendly power by the Western world—allowed Syria to be partially admitted to international community. This was best demonstrated with President Assad's

invitation to the Mediterranean Union summit at Paris (at Turkey's insistence) in 2008.

The political alliance and economic partnership with Syria represented the core of the "zero problems with neighbors doctrine" designed by the then Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu. The foreign policy vision was based on the premise that Ankara should not have any hostile neighbors and that the construction of strong ties based on economic interdependence is a prerequisite for Turkey's peaceful rise as a "great power" in the Middle East and beyond. Davutoğlu had long argued that Turkey needed to effectively utilize what he termed "strategic depth," namely, its key geostrategic location between energy-rich regions (i.e., Middle East, Caucasia, and Central Asia) and prosperous democracies (i.e., Europe). Unlike in the times of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey did not need to wage military campaigns in these regions, but it would wage diplomatic/economic campaigns instead (Davutoğlu 2001).

A democratic, prosperous, liberal, and peaceful Turkey acting as the pioneer and leader of a new Middle East must have seemed an extremely appealing scenario for many observers at the beginning of the Arab Spring. While Ankara has never publically referred to the Turkish model concept—perhaps fearing that such a move could be detrimental to its image across the Arab world—Western actors such as the EU and various European governments often praised the so-called model and defined it as a mixture of the following: (a) a Muslim-majority country, (b) an Islamic-oriented ruling party coexisting with a secular institutional structure, and (c) an almost completed process of democratic consolidation based on (d) dialogue with the West through formal ties with organizations such as NATO and the EU (Villelabeitia 2011). Even before the outbreak of 2011 street protests, Middle Eastern and North African countries such as Syria, Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco were described as potential targets where the Turkish model could be "effectively marketed." In contrast, the Turkish model was seen to be an unrealistic prospect for Gulf monarchies—which seemingly lacked structural features required for the beginning of democratization—as well as for fragile heterogeneous polities clearly divided along sectarian/ethnic lines such as Iraq and Lebanon.

Diverging to some extent from the utopian vision promoted by the Turkish model literature, Ankara was not necessarily interested in the construction of Turkish-style political-institutional systems across the region but rather in the recognition of the regional leadership of Turkey by other major players of the Middle East as well as by Western actors such as the US and the EU. In this context, Ankara evaluated the debates on the Turkish model as a useful tool to win the discursive battle over other possible models of regional leadership, especially that of Saudi Arabia and Iran (Ayoob 2011; Ennis and Momani 2013; Göksel 2013). At the beginning of the Arab Spring in 2011, Turkey possessed certain advantages that its rivals such as Iran and Saudi Arabia lacked: privileged relationship with the Western world, imperfect and fragile yet democratizing political system, potentially attractive multicultural open society, and prosperous economy built not on natural resources but on modern industrial production and booming service sector.

Even though the Arab Spring seemed at first as a historic opportunity for the rise of Turkey in the Middle East, the turbulent post-2011 period has challenged all the aforementioned characteristics of the Turkish model. The outbreak of a civil war in Syria was arguably the "beginning of the end" for the Turkish model as it has created many complex problems for Turkish politics, economy, and society. When Ankara clearly took the side of the Syrian opposition and began arming rebel groups such as the Free Syrian Army, the Turkish-Syrian alliance has collapsed, and it has been replaced by an ever-worsening hostility between Ankara and Damascus. Millions of Syrian refugees have fled to Turkey, creating a heavy pressure on the socioeconomic resources of the country. Gradually, the entire regional leadership role of Turkey has begun to resemble a "house of cards" as the downfall of the partnership with Syria now symbolizes the decline of Turkey's delicate pursuit of regional leadership. Hence, the period of Turkish foreign policy many cynical commentators often refer to as the "many problems with all neighbors doctrine" begun (Zalewski 2013).

The Post-2011 Middle East and the Inner Contradictions of the Turkish Model

While many parts of the Arab world have been shaken by the 2011 uprisings, Turkey has also begun to experience numerous internal crises. Political stability and economic growth were the two main pillars upon which Turkey's (and that of the AKP's) ascendancy to power stood throughout the 2000s. The post-2011 period in Turkey has instead been characterized by a vicious cycle of political instability, stagnating growth, collapsing foreign partnerships (e.g., with Syria, Iran, and Russia), and deteriorating international image. In this context, the Syrian Civil War has proved to be a turning point. Despite heavy pressure from Ankara, the Assad regime refused to negotiate with the Syrian opposition, and the Turkish proposals for democratic reforms were not implemented. Turkey's proven inability to steer the course of Syrian politics has been a major blow to its credibility as a major Middle Eastern power. Moreover, the entire Syrian crisis has highlighted the limits of *soft power*-oriented Turkish foreign policy doctrine as it has become clear that diplomatic and economic tools cannot effectively shape the politics of a nondemocratic actor such as Syria (Aras 2012).[7]

As the Syrian crisis has deepened over the years, the Turkish Middle Eastern policy has truly been put to the test. With the declaration of open hostility to the Damascus regime and the entry of Turkish armed forces into Syrian territory with the Operation Euphrates Shield, Turkey has been dragged into a direct military confrontation with Syria. Turkey's critical decision to support the Syrian opposition

[7]For a detailed examination of the limits of Turkey's soft power in Syria and the broader Middle East region, see the contribution by Guida and Göksel (2017).

in the summer of 2011 seemed to be in line with the prodemocratic vision of the Turkish model. Ankara, after all, was envisaged as the harbinger of democratization in the Middle East, and to support the repression of Syrian protestors by the authoritarian Assad regime would be a betrayal of democratic values. However, the AKP has also faced similar protests at home with the 2013 Gezi Park movement, and its heavy-handed reaction has caused many observers to question the sincerity of its rhetorical dedication to democratization. In light of the post-2011 developments in Turkish and Middle Eastern politics, can we rightfully declare that the Turkish model has failed in both at its home and elsewhere?

The fall of the Turkish model can be addressed in terms of socioeconomic and political factors. Turkey's "economic miracle" of the 2000s could not be sustained in the post-2011 period, and the 2013 Gezi protests simply represent the tip of an iceberg of deep structural problems within Turkish political economy: firstly, a disparity between economic growth and social development and, secondly, a growing income inequality across different parts of urban areas as well as different parts of the entire country (Taştan 2013). The AKP's earlier economic success was largely based on the unprecedented growth of small- and medium-sized enterprises across Anatolia (Demir et al. 2004). This phenomenon, dubbed by many as "Islamic Calvinism" (*European Stability Initiative* 2005), was a mixture of Islamic-oriented political discourses and an economic development model based on free market, individual initiative, and private companies.

The model worked well until the late 2000s and provided a huge electoral support for the AKP in parliamentary elections. In the post-2011 period, however, economic growth has fallen from an annual rate of approximately 8.5–2.6% (Goldman 2014; Sönmez 2017). In conjunction with the stagnation of economic growth, the value of Turkish lira vis-à-vis euro and US dollar has sharply fallen since 2011. This has resulted in an increase of public debt, and imports have become more expensive due to the currency's devaluation, leading to a worsening trade deficit as well (Sönmez 2017). The deteriorating macroeconomic situation has been accompanied by the emergence of popular unrest from the middle class that had massively expanded in size due to the economic boom of the early 2000s. In this sense, the 2013 Gezi protests highlight the growing frustration of younger generations with the political economic status quo of the AKP rule.[8]

The Gezi protests have clearly illustrated the inner contradictions of the Turkish model as the liberal democratic image of Turkey vanished in the eyes of the international community within the space of a few weeks in the summer of 2013. The heavy police crackdown on protestors has revealed that while preaching democratization to Middle Eastern autocracies, Turkey itself has been paradoxically moving toward an illiberal political direction away from democracy. Far from being the inclusive open society model it was depicted earlier, Turkey has gradually been transformed into a closed society that shows little to no tolerance for any forms

[8]For a detailed study of the 2013 Gezi protests and economic development in Turkey, see the contribution by Tansel (2017).

of political or social dissent with the actions of the AKP government. Increasing restrictions of freedom of expression, violations of minority rights (particularly of Kurds), and escalation of terror attacks in fashionable districts of Istanbul and other major cities have all negatively impacted on Turkey's international image in recent years (*Al-Jazeera* 2013; Sönmez 2017). The military coup attempt on 15 July 2016—allegedly organized by the secretive Gülen movement that was an erstwhile ally of the AKP—has further damaged Turkey's reputation as most observers around the world have come to associate the country with an acute political instability.

Since 2013, Turkey's report card on civil and political rights has worsened as highlighted by various agencies such as the *Freedom House Index* (2017). Academic freedom and freedom of the press and on the Internet have also been in a downward trend that has further deteriorated after the 15th of July coup attempt (*Reporters Without Borders* 2016). Turkey now stands as one of the most repressive countries in the world in terms of press freedom as it has the record number of imprisoned journalists and is ranked 154th out of 180 countries—trailing behind countries such as Russia, Iraq, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (*Reporters Without Borders* 2016).

The downward trend and failure of the so-called Turkish democratic model in the post-2011 Middle East have been made—more evident in conjunction with the relative success of the singular Arab Spring success story—democratization in Tunisia (Dağı 2014). Even though many scholars (e.g., Kirişçi 2011; Göksel 2014) presented Turkey as a source of inspiration for building the post-revolutionary Tunisia after 2011, the trajectories of these two countries have radically diverged since then. The transition process of Tunisia and the post-2011 experience of its mainstream Islamic movement, the Ennahda Party, have developed in an opposite direction to recent developments in Turkish politics. Tunisia has been consistently governed by coalitions (including Islamic Ennahda and several secular parties), while the AKP has always ruled alone, and its relations with opposition parties (in particular the Kemalist CHP and the Kurdish-led HDP) have been characterized by increasing tensions. Political tensions between the AKP and opposition parties have fueled ideological polarization in Turkey and created deep rifts in its sociopolitical life. While Turkey has become less and less democratic with each passing year, Tunisia has been on the steady path to democratization since 2011. The *Freedom House Index* (2017) report on the freedom of the press and on the Internet, for instance, shows that Tunisia was way behind Turkey in both accounts in 2011, while it is now much ahead. In this context, the post-Arab Spring period has so far proved that Tunisia could actually become a more realistic democratic model than Turkey for an Arab world in transition. Still, one should be careful enough to not repeat the earlier mistakes of the proponents of the Turkish model and admit that the applicability of any sociopolitical and economic model to different national contexts depends on numerous unpredictable variables.

Conclusion

This study has argued that it is methodologically problematic to try and apply the Turkish model to the post-2011 Middle East. While there are many structural differences between Turkey and Arab societies of the region, the validity of the Turkish model has also been increasingly questioned in recent years to the extent that it seems to have lost all the attractive features (e.g., democratization, economic development, and political stability) that had made Turkey an inspiration in the first place. As such, the inner contradictions of the Turkish model have become apparent since 2013—and particularly after the 2013 Gezi protests. Moreover, if the complexity and depth of political/economic/social problems that today beset Turkey are taken into account, it would indeed be appropriate to ask if Ankara could still be regarded as a major player of the Middle Eastern political system. It is true that the Turkish government has been attempting to reverse Turkey's declining fortunes in the region by launching a military intervention into Syria and adopting a proactive foreign policy posture once again by entering into diplomatic negotiations with Iran, Russia, and the USA. However, the Assad regime has consolidated its hold over the country, and no matter the outcome of Operation Euphrates Shield, Turkey has clearly failed to achieve its initial primary objective in Syria: the overthrow of President Assad. In any case, Turkey still has a number of domestic problems (e.g., political instability, terrorism, ideological polarization, refugee inflow, Kurdish question) to remedy before it would be ready again to start another assertive foray into Middle Eastern affairs beyond its long border with Syria. Even so, it is likely that Turkey has lost a historic opportunity to market its modernization experience to the Middle East and that the Arab countries in transition would rather look at Tunis rather than Ankara from now on.

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Chapter 5
Ties that Bind: Popular Uprisings and the Politics of Neoliberalism in the Middle East

Cemal Burak Tansel

The momentous uprisings classified under the epithet of the Arab Spring and the Gezi Park protests in Turkey have spawned a considerable interdisciplinary academic literature that strives to account for the origins, evolution, and gradual dissolution of the social mobilizations that shaped these events (Yom 2015). While the initial response to both events, in academic circles as well as in press outlets, was shaped by a significant degree of surprise and disbelief, the emergent literature has already provided important sets of analytical and conceptual tools to contextualize and explain the uprisings (Patel et al. 2014, p. 57; Gause 2011). Insights from critical strands in international relations (IR) and international political economy (IPE) as well as economic and political sociology have helped fashion refreshing lenses through which the events have been analyzed. Viewed from such perspectives, these episodes of popular struggle have been contextualized as "a concatenation of political upheavals" that were triggered by a growing discontent with neoliberalism, though the Arab uprisings' roots in the inner contradictions of neoliberalism have arguably received a more sustained analytical scrutiny than the Turkish case so far (Anderson 2011, p. 5).[1]

This study argues that questions of political economy are crucial for understanding the root causes of social uprisings as well as the enduring challenges faced by mobilized masses. The primary aim here is to concretize the linkages between processes of neoliberalization and popular struggles and to map out the common developments that underpinned and were targeted by the recent mobilizations in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Given the practical constraints of

[1]For a selection of notable analyses that have highlighted the impact of neoliberalism on these popular uprisings, see Joya (2011), Abdelrahman (2012), Kandil (2012), Bogaert (2013), Hanieh (2013), Munif (2013), Tuğal (2013), Yörük (2014), and Allinson (2015).

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the study, the analytical scope is limited to the cases of Egypt and Turkey for the purpose of producing a concise comparative account. These two countries not only witnessed arguably the most spectacular manifestations of the popular indignation against a triumphant neoliberal hegemony, but they also share a parallel trajectory of neoliberalization—notwithstanding a considerable degree of divergence in their political apparatuses and international relations. Accordingly, the following analysis retraces the historical contours of neoliberal restructuring in both countries to render visible the common ties of socioeconomic predicaments voiced by the movements on the streets.

This endeavor should not be read to the effect that neoliberalism was *the single root cause* of the uprisings—indeed; monocausal explanations of these events are bound to obscure the specific, historically constituted structural conditions and agential forces that shaped their trajectories. The following exploration is concerned more directly with underscoring how the uneven unfolding of neoliberalism in the MENA sharpened and, in certain cases, created the very conditions which the mobilized masses targeted in the protests across the region. The popular discontent with the disastrous effects of neoliberal economic reforms manifested across public spaces of protest and took many different forms: it was echoed in the chants of *aish, hurriyah, 'adalah ijtima'iyah* ("bread, freedom, social justice") in Tahrir Square, it was voiced by Hussein Nagi Felhi who shouted "no for misery, no for unemployment" before ending his life in Sidi Bouzid, and it was articulated by public declarations of the Anti-Capitalist Muslims as this is a group at Gezi Park who criticized the incumbent Justice and Development Party (hereafter, AKP) administration for using "religion to legitimize capitalism" (Hanieh 2013, p. 2; Whitaker 2010; Yinanç 2013). The impact of neoliberalism on the genesis of the uprisings, especially in Turkey, was further evident in the protesters' effort to confront the commodification of the environment and the urban space. Once again, this is not to claim that the 2013 Gezi protests embodied a conscious collective will to oppose neoliberalism per se, but the concrete grievances the vast majority of protesters expressed vis-à-vis the destruction of urban commons and the protection of Gezi as "one of the few remaining green spots in downtown Istanbul" compel us to take a closer look at how the intensified neoliberalization has reconfigured the public's access to and control over these spaces (Kural 2013; Kuymulu 2013).

Focusing on the impact of neoliberalism offers a further analytical utility in terms of assessing the states' responses to the uprisings. While the mobilization in Egypt succeeded remarkably at fulfilling the initial political aim of the revolution, i.e., the overthrow of the Mubarak regime, it could not give birth to a stable, progressive historic bloc strong enough to challenge the army's entrenched position. Consequently, General Sisi's coup has invalidated the electoral victory of the Muslim Brotherhood and dispelled the protesters' hope of retaining the military as the "praetorian guard" of the revolution which was invoked in the calls for the "unity of the people and the army" (Kienle 2012, p. 538). The loss of the revolutionary momentum and the ascendancy of the military regime have been portrayed by many as a return to *status quo ante* characterized by authoritarian governance,

yet painting the post-2011 trajectory of Egypt as a gradual retrogression back into "resilient authoritarianism" risks obscuring the durability of not merely a static authoritarian rule, but of the neoliberal program sanctioned by all the major power players, including the Muslim Brotherhood.[2] In this aspect, it is important to diagnose that the revolution could only highlight and attempt to neutralize the worst aspects of "crony capitalism" that the Mubarak regime symbolized without being able to dethrone the enduring neoliberal hegemony (Hinnebusch 2006; Sika 2015, p. 80).

The Turkish state's violent response to Gezi and the subsequent materialization of a climate of fear within which the state apparatuses were utilized extensively to criminalize and marginalize dissent have also been highlighted as a return to or the emergence of an authoritarian governance in the country (Benhabib 2013; Gürsel 2014; Vick 2013). Yet the mode of authoritarianism that numerous critics now associate with the AKP regime strictly revolves around questions of state coercion and maladministration. In contrast, I argue that the defining character of the increasingly visible authoritarianism of the AKP is its ability to subvert, manipulate, and instrumentalize the existing circuits of representative democracy to guard not only its own grip on power but also the conduits of capital accumulation. Coercion and maladministration are thus singular aspects of what Ian Bruff (2014, p. 115) has labeled "authoritarian neoliberalism," namely, a broader body of practices which aim at the "reconfiguring of state and institutional power in an attempt to insulate certain policies and institutional practices from social and political dissent."[3] This position differs from those that conceptualize the authoritarian modality of the existing power structure of the Turkish state purely on the basis of its growing reliance on its coercive functions.[4] The AKP's authoritarian neoliberalism does not exclusively rely on the utilization of coercion and intimidation against its opponents but operates through intensifying processes of neoliberalization with which "the state increasingly expands its penetration into areas of social life such as urban planning, socioeconomic regeneration of deprived areas or regions, and public health services and programs, as it seeks to stabilize the contradictions and dislocations emanating from socioeconomic restructuring without granting material concessions to subordinate social groups" (Bruff 2014, p. 119). These practices further represent the erosion of a preexisting hegemonic rule and are indicative of a sea change in politics through which the ruling bloc prioritizes "the explicit exclusion and marginalization of subordinate social groups

[2]For post-uprising debates on authoritarianism, see Valbjørn (2012), Pace and Cavatorta (2012), Volpi (2013), Heydemann and Leenders (2014), and Schwedler (2015).

[3]For the conceptualization of authoritarian neoliberalism, see Tansel (2017) and Bekmen (2014, p. 47).

[4]See, for example, the discussions of the authoritarian character of the Turkish state in the following works, which—regardless of their serious methodological conflicts—conceptualize the present-day authoritarianism as a remnant of a past configuration of the state power wherein the military reigned supreme: Bedirhanoğlu and Yalman (2010) and İnsel (2003).

through the constitutionally and legally engineered self-disempowerment of nominally democratic institutions, governments, and parliaments" (Bruff 2014, p. 116).

In the remainder of the study, I detail the expansion of the processes of neoliberalization in Egypt and Turkey and discuss their impact on the issues raised by the mobilized masses in 2011 and 2013. While the authoritarian modalities of neoliberalization warrant a detailed examination of the ways in which administrative apparatuses and legal mechanisms that govern labor relations, urban and environmental policy, and other sites of social reproduction have been restructured, due to space constraints, the following discussion mostly focuses on historicizing the processes of neoliberalization in broad strokes and the impact of these processes on the conditions and struggles of the working masses.

The Twisted Paths of Neoliberal Restructuring in Egypt and Turkey

It is tempting to subscribe to a universal vision of the expansion of neoliberalism from the late 1970s onward as a meticulously masterminded project of a global elite bent on eliminating the barriers before capital accumulation. Yet "neoliberalisms" in their concrete political and socioeconomic manifestations "are always (in some way or another) hybrid or composite structures," and "the specification and exploration of different processes of neoliberalization" is paramount to identifying the mechanisms with which the neoliberal restructurings have attempted to reshape state power, to heighten the scope of commodification, and to insulate popular resistance (Peck and Tickell 2002, p. 383). The materializations of neoliberal regimes in Egypt and Turkey were no exceptions to this hybridity, and their historical trajectories reveal frequent, but increasingly constricted, vacillations between liberalization and resistance.

In both cases, the initial move toward challenging the preexisting configuration of the economic management largely defined by import substitution industrialization (ISI) policies occurred in the 1970s. Egypt, under Anwar Sadat, initiated its transition to an "open door" model (*infitah*) in 1973–1974 which envisioned a gradual liberalization of the economy through promoting "foreign and local private sector initiatives" in the areas of "large industry, trade, construction, and finance" (Mitchell 2002, p. 211). Simultaneously, calls for liberalization amplified in Turkey as the ISI regime's earlier stable performance in the decade left in its place a serious debt crisis which forced the government to request a rescue mission from the IMF in 1978 (Arıcanlı and Rodrik 1990, p. 1344).

From the 1980s to the 1990s, the process of neoliberalization gained momentum through a mixture of external pressures imposed upon by the structural adjustment programs and internal reform initiatives led by debt of incumbent governments and "encouraged by the emergence of new class forces" (Bromley 1994, p. 172). After two failed standby agreements with the IMF and a growing account deficit, Turkey

was still under an enormous economic burden in 1980. The coup d'état staged by the military on 12 September 1980 changed the situation drastically, as the economic dimension of the officers' quest to reinstall stability in the country relied on securing the financial assistance of the IMF. The new structural adjustment program aimed at reinventing the macroeconomic policy in a liberal, export-oriented outlook, but its implementation required neutralizing the opposing class forces, and this was accompanied by wage repression and a frontal assault on the existing working-class organizations (Boratav 2011, pp. 148–151; Yeldan 1995, p. 54). The military regime facilitated a transition to democracy only after the destruction of the major social obstacles on its path to further liberalization, and its civilian successor, the Motherland Party (ANAP) government, duly followed the same principles. These policies, however, were not implemented in a uniform manner across time or without political and social opposition. Illustrative of the hybrid nature of the concrete processes of neoliberalization, the late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed brief government forays into accommodating social demands which translated into "accelerated public sector expenditures" and surges in real wages (Yeldan 2006, pp. 199–203). Yet the appetite for these appeasement strategies waned rapidly as the growth policy predicated on "massive inflows of short-term foreign capital" crashed in 1994, compelling the unstable coalition of governments to re-embrace "the technical/economic logic of neoliberalism" (Yeldan 2006, p. 199; Cizre-Sakallıoğlu and Yeldan 2000, p. 504).

In Egypt, the universalization of the neoliberal logic followed a seesaw trend as the promises of Sadat's *infitah* fell short of creating sustainable growth and his successor, Hosni Mubarak, did not seem extremely enthusiastic about extending the scope of the already fragile threads of liberalization. Mubarak's reticence was not particularly surprising given that he inherited a country that had become a net importer of its vital food supplies and strangled by a foreign debt of $19.5 billion after embracing the "open door" model (Kandil 2012, pp. 206–207). Yet Egypt too swallowed the joint IMF–World Bank pill in 1991 and fully enshrined its fragmented neoliberalism under the auspices of the Economic Restructuring and Adjustment Program (ERSAP). The package enforced "the privatization of public sector enterprises, the liberalization of trade and prices, the introduction of flexible labor legislation and the removal of progressive social policies" (Joya 2011, p. 370; Mitchell 1999, p. 457).

Another pillar of this renewed push for neoliberal restructuring in Egypt was the EU's Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) program which was launched in 1995. While the EMP ostensibly aimed at encouraging a North–South partnership with a view to creating a Mediterranean free-trade zone which would benefit all parties, both the underlying principles and the implementation of the agreement favored European states and put extra burden on the vestiges of the Egyptian state's Nasserite welfare commitments. As Rosemary Hollis (2012, pp. 83–84) underscores, the EMP not only encouraged trade liberalization in a manner that enabled European companies to "outperform local producers and ...drive them out of business," but its imposed "formulae for enhancing economic growth ...were

more likely to promote efficiency measures that actually cut jobs, at least in the short term, as opposed to generating them."

The immediate consequences of Mubarak's new found commitment to neoliberalism was a reduction of the government deficit to 2% in 1994 and a 4.3% rise in GDP growth rate from 1992 to 1998–1999 (Brownlee 2012, p. 66). On the other side of the coin, the cumulative effects of the liberalization policies manifested in a sharp increase in the percentage of people living on the poverty line of $2 per day from 24.8% in 1990 to 29.9% in 1998 as "poverty took an upward turn . . .[through] the mechanisms of impoverishment and marginalization" (Bogaert 2013, p. 225; Ibrahim 2004, p. 482). By 1998, "more than 70% of the workers in the private sector lived in poverty" while "real wages in the public industrial sector dropped by 8% from 1990/91 to 1995/96" (Bogaert 2013, p. 225; Mitchell 1999, p. 463). Meanwhile, the series of privatizations enforced by ERSAP not only resulted in layoffs but also in the deterioration of the working conditions as "[m]any of the specified benefits enjoyed under state ownership were now rescinded" (Tripp 2013, p. 156). From 1993 to 2003, "197 public enterprises were privatized and their workforce were either laid off or forced to retire" (Joya 2011, p. 373).

Both countries witnessed a considerable deepening of their neoliberal orientation in the 2000s which was bolstered by a set of shared arrangements ranging from extensive privatizations to the administrative and legal reforms sanctioning new labor policies. The AKP's political ascendancy in the aftermath of the 2001 crisis was accompanied by a remarkable continuity with the pre-2001 precepts of economic governance and the IMF instructions. The successive AKP governments, far from challenging the type of policies that underpinned the recurrent crises in the 1990s and in 2001, adopted a neoliberal strategy from the onset. The outcome of this orientation, as was the case in Egypt after ERSAP, was a drastic decrease in inflation mirrored by high-growth figures in GDP per capita and FDI inflows—sustained by a stunning $35 billion worth of privatizations in 10 years (Özelleştirme İdaresi Başkanlığı 2015). Consequently, Turkey's pre-Gezi economic performance has been a popular subject of the mainstream international press—again comparable to Egypt's "success story" in the 1990s—as the AKP-led neoliberalization rode on a discourse of "economic miracle" reinforced both by the international financial elite and a legion of sympathetic commentators.[5] Yet the reforms consistently failed at launching a policy of sustainable job creation, and GDP growth rates were accompanied by an unemployment figure that never fell below the 9% threshold (Telli et al. 2006; Subaşat 2014). The failure of the employment strategy has been further visible in youth unemployment, the rate of which remained at 20.4% by 2013 after a 24.5% peak in 2009 (see Table 5.1).

The employed workforce, 63.5% (or 17 million) of which was composed of wage laborers in 2013, has also been affected by deteriorating working conditions and a gradually institutionalized precarity (Sönmez 2013). The Labor Law of 2003

[5]For a critique of the methodological justifications of the neoliberal model espoused by the AKP, see Tansel (2015).

Table 5.1 Unemployment in Egypt, Turkey and Tunisia (2003–2013)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total unemployment (% of total labor force) (modeled ILO estimate)											
Egypt	10.4	10.7	11.2	10.6	8.9	8.7	9.4	9.0	12.0	12.7	12.7
Turkey	10.5	10.8	10.6	10.2	10.3	11.0	14.0	11.9	9.8	9.2	10.0
Tunisia	14.5	13.9	14.2	12.5	12.4	12.4	13.3	13.0	18.3	14.0	13.3
Youth unemployment (% of total labor force ages 15–24) (modeled ILO estimate)											
Egypt	29.1	30.4	33.7	31.4	26.1	25.8	27.0	26.3	35.5	38.2	38.9
Turkey	19.9	20.0	19.2	18.4	19.3	19.9	24.5	21.2	17.9	17.1	20.4
Tunisia	31.1	30.1	30.5	27.5	27.8	28.3	30.5	29.4	42.7	32.4	31.2
Unemployment with tertiary education (% of total unemployment)											
Egypt	–	–	–	–	–	31.7	35.5	39.7	32.1	33.2	–
Turkey	11.6	12.7	11.4	12.0	13.1	13.9	–	–	–	–	–
Tunisia	9.0	8.6	13.6	19.2	22.2	25.9	28.4	32.0	30.9	–	–

Data from The World Bank World Development Indicators and the IMF World Economic Outlook Database (October 2015)

not only encouraged flexible arrangements and subcontracting but also “limited job security by excluding from its remit all firms employing less than 30 workers” which constitutes “90% of manufacturing establishments in Turkey” (Özden 2014, p. 165). The government’s current labor and employment policy, announced in 2012 under the title of National Employment Strategy, operates on the same premises. As Sümercan Bozkurt (2013, p. 213) highlights, the strategy “has mainly been based upon measures of decreasing non-wage labor costs by means of reducing employer social security contributions, ensuring subsidies to employers for the employment of disadvantaged categories such as youth and women, introducing active labor market policy schemes and new flexible work contracts.” The constant erosion of the workers’ rights has not only threatened wage and job security; an increasingly lenient regulatory regime and the proliferation of loosely supervised subcontractors have also created an extremely unsafe working environment that has cost the lives of a staggering number of workers. From 2002 to 2014, 12,686 workers lost their lives in workplace accidents, while the construction sector’s state-sanctioned growth has been accompanied by the death of 1754 workers on-site in the 2008–2012 period (Müller 2014; Yıldırım 2014). The corollary of the bleak employment prospects coupled with weakened job security has been a stark increase in household debt and the expansion of consumer credits. In 2012, “the total of consumer loans and credit card debt” proportional to GDP stood at 18.7%, while the ratio of household debt to personal income stood at 49%, “a seven-fold increase since the end of 2003” (Karaçimen 2014, p. 163). In short, the mythology of steady growth that has embroidered the AKP’s neoliberal governance has effectively masked the governments’ repeated attempts to facilitate greater capital accumulation by undermining the conditions of the working masses

and the cultivation of a debt regime that targets low-income groups and wage laborers.[6]

The destructive effects of unemployment and precarity were not always subordinated to the mythology of growth in other locales of neoliberal restructuring. The trigger of the Arab uprisings, Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation itself was a desperate defiance of the state of insecurity felt by the region's unemployed youth, precarious workers, and the "middle-class poor" (Bayat 2011). It is no coincidence that the soon-to-be-deposed Zine el Abidine Ben Ali's immediate reaction to the protests was to promise more jobs—followed by a threat of due punishment for those who refused to leave the streets (Borger 2010). In 2010, the Tunisian unemployment rate stood at 13%, while 32% of the unemployed possessed a tertiary education degree. Egypt fared slightly better in 2010 with a 9% total unemployment though it was still plagued by 26.3% youth unemployment (Table 5.1). Yet beyond these figures, both countries were marked by a wide variety of informal and precarious labor arrangements which did little to uplift the conditions of the "employed" segments of the population captured by the official statistics. By 2011, the size of these two countries' informal economies had reached (and even surpassed that in the Egyptian case) around 30% of their GDP (Malik and Awadallah 2013). Simultaneously, the erosion of the welfare apparatuses left the poorest and the most vulnerable increasingly dependent on faith and communal-based charities which "became sources of social assistance for low-income households and communities" (Karshenas et al. 2014, p. 728).

As in the Turkish case, the conditions of the employed workforce too have been steadily undermined by neoliberal reforms in Egypt. With the merging of the Law No. 83 on Special Economic Zones with the Unified Labor Law of 2003, indefinite "flexible" contracts were legalized, and "highly restrictive terms for strikes" were put into effect (Beinin 2009, p. 450). The formation of Ahmed Nazif's government in 2004 further intensified the processes of privatization and macroeconomic reform. Nazif's so-called economic dream team presided over the sale of 80 public enterprises from 2004 to 2006 and reduced state subsidies for staple commodities (Cook 2012, pp. 175–176; Joya 2011, p. 370; Brownlee 2012, p. 128).[7] From 2004 to 2009, amidst acute food shortages and a "bread intifada," the percentage of Egyptians living below the poverty line rose from 19.6% to 21.8% (Springborg 2011, p. 87; Ciezadlo 2011). Deterioration of the living conditions and outrage at the government gave birth to a steady bloc of opposition comprising workers, middle-class voters, and students. Loosely grouped under the rubric of a prodemocracy movement, the emergent protest networks "brought together disparate groups of professionals, students, veteran political activists, youth wings of

[6]Karaçimen (2014, p. 174) notes that "consumer credit has been increasingly used by lower income people and wage earners" as "around 42% of consumer loan borrowers are people who earn less than 1000 TL per month."

[7]While there were intermittent increases in the subsidy levels in the 2000s, especially in response to the global market fluctuations, "the present subsidy levels are still much lower than they were in the 1970s and early 1980s" (Frerichs 2015).

political parties and individuals from different backgrounds who exercised a high level of interchangeable membership between different organizations" (Abdelrahman 2012, p. 616).

While the prodemocracy activists constituted an important challenge to the unpopular Nazif government, the struggle against the neoliberal program won its major victories when organized labor paralyzed notable sites of production. In 2006, approximately 90,000 public and private sector workers went on strike. In 2008, more than 500,000 workers were involved in industrial action, and the number of collective actions reached 609 in the same year—in contrast to an average of 118 in the 1998–2003 period (Tripp 2013, p. 157; Beinin 2009, p. 450). As Marie Duboc (2015, p. 232) notes, "[b]etween 2004 and 2010, over 2 million workers voiced their grievances through strikes, sit-ins, and other forms of protest against the poor living conditions caused by the erosion of wages, rising in starvation, and precarious employment." With high-profile strikes and occupations launched by civil servants at the Property Tax Authority and the textile workers at the Misr Spinning and Weaving Company in Mahalla al-Kubra, the working-class militancy was conjoined by a host of other opposition forces that collectively called for socioeconomic reform and political change (Tripp 2013, p. 158; Zemni et al. 2013).

As the picture presented so far clearly indicates, the explosion of the Egyptian discontent in 2011 was not an entirely spontaneous uprising devoid of a recent history of struggles. The same argument could also be made for the Turkish case. While the mainstream media and commentators seemed to be taken aback by the unexpected growth and durability of the protests in 2013, the Turkish neoliberalism of the 2000s too had been marked by signs of instability and sporadic resistance. In the absence of a coherent political opposition—despite the considerable strengthening and presence of Kurdish opposition in the parliament—and facing the state's increasingly authoritarian protection of neoliberalism, the social forces that struggle against these reforms were often forced to concentrate on building issue-based campaigns. As such, prior to Gezi, many of the protest groups and activists that actively campaigned against the commodification of, *inter alia*, the environment, higher education, and urban spaces could not develop a common platform with which to generalize their struggle. The efforts to build such platforms and bridge them with parliamentary opposition and trade union movements met severe state repression.

Nevertheless, there were still noteworthy exceptions and key moments in which the seemingly disparate struggles were united—albeit temporarily—as part of a common opposition against neoliberal reforms. Once again mirroring the coeval developments in Egypt, these struggles revolved primarily around working-class mobilization which has had a particularly unnerving effect on the government. One of the most important illustrations of both the discontent against neoliberalism and the government's disdain toward popular resistance against the pillars of neoliberal restructuring emerged during the AKP's dispute with the workers of the privatized tobacco monopoly TEKEL in 2009–2010. After a drawn-out privatization effort, the company was finally sold to British American Tobacco for $1.72 billion in February 2008 (BBC News 2008). The sale was followed by the announcement that

12 TEKEL factories would be shut down and more than 10,000 workers would be transferred to other branches of public sector under the 4-C public employment scheme which only offered a temporary contract on drastically reduced wages and benefits (Tait 2010).[8] In response, 12,000 TEKEL workers from all around the country initiated a 78-day-long occupation at the center of Ankara from December 2009 to March 2010 and were strongly supported by many segments of the public (Özuğurlu 2011).

The TEKEL workers' collective action was an important link in a wider chain of labor unrest that underpinned the last decade. Despite the utilization of legal and coercive barriers to counteract labor militancy and the constant erosion of the unions' legitimacy and effectiveness, the 2003–2013 period had witnessed a series of important labor struggles, including strikes by shipyard and railway workers, public servants, steelworkers, and miners (Çakır 2008, 2009; Hurriyet Daily News 2011; Vardar 2012). The AKP's hard-line stance toward the TEKEL workers was thus emblematic of a broader vehemence against the social forces that directly clash with neoliberalism, crystallizing the government's determination to undermine working-class militancy.

Both the 2013 Gezi Park protests and the 2011 Arab uprisings have demonstrated the centrality of collective action to challenge the existing structures of oppression, and the organized labor force occupies a key position to target neoliberalism through its presence in the sites of production and accumulation. For both the AKP and the post-Mubarak regime(s) in Egypt, domesticating and disorganizing the labor force has been a crucial component of preserving and deepening neoliberalism. It is no surprise that in the aftermath of Tahrir, in March 2011, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) swiftly outlawed strikes and demonstrations as well as "any incitement or calls for strike action" (Tripp 2013, p. 161; Duboc 2015, p. 246). The interim post-revolution government's unease with the prospect of continuing labor activism in Egypt was voiced by the minister of labor who labeled the striking workers as "irresponsible" and urged them to "take into consideration the financial crisis and the huge responsibilities which the government has to shoulder" (Abdelrahman 2012, p. 624). This statement echoed the then Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan's outburst against the striking TEKEL workers in 2010 when he chastised the workers for "agitation" and blamed them for creating a smoke screen over the country's seemingly spectacular growth rate (Radikal 2010; Hurriyet Daily News 2010). In both cases, the tactics for marginalizing the working-class militancy differ (albeit in increasingly smaller margins), yet the regimes share a common antagonism toward social forces who attempt to defy the established economic policies characterized by key precepts of neoliberalism.

[8]The estimated wage cut was $250 p/m; see Özuğurlu (2011, p. 180).

Coda: Beyond Tahrir and Gezi

The writing of this study was shortly completed after the fourth year anniversary of the Egyptian uprising of 2011 when those who attempted to march to the sealed-off Tahrir Square to reiterate the demands of the revolution were met with the iron fist of Sisi's military government (Meky 2015; The Economist 2015). In the same week, the AKP government employed one of its textbooks of authoritarian neoliberal tactics by "postponing" a 15,000-strong strike by metal workers on grounds that the strike constituted a "threat to national security" (Özdal 2015). With Sisi in charge in Egypt and the AKP's once-hailed democratic credentials continuing to disintegrate even more so in the aftermath of the failed 15 July 2016 coup in Turkey, the struggle for democracy and social justice as articulated by the mass mobilizations of 2011 and 2013 seems to have stalled in both countries. Yet it would be a mistake to write off the significance of the uprisings on the basis of their immediate failure to challenge, once and for all, the established regimes of accumulation safeguarded by authoritarianism or legitimized by the increasingly limited mechanisms of liberal democracy.

While the unbounded air of optimism that surrounded the uprisings has left in its place a somber realization that confronting the very pillars of a regime's power (both in economic and political senses) means becoming a beacon for state violence, the protests have effectively revealed the possibility and urgency of designing alternative political and socioeconomic configurations. The question of the specific political *form* with which such an alternative can become a feasible national project and capture the multiplex social forces that were bound by the uprisings could only be solved by those who partake in those struggles themselves. As such, while the regimes in Egypt and Turkey have reconstituted their grip on power—albeit with different cadres or a diminished degree of legitimacy—the uprisings and their lessons will continue to inform the forces of opposition. Consequently, future struggles have to be shaped by a commitment to undertaking the thankless task of organizing and mobilizing the subaltern social forces in the everyday life, thus maintaining those communal bonds beyond the euphoric moments of square protests and public demonstrations. As Asef Bayat (2013, p. 595) underscores, after the revolutionary dust settles, "winners are not those who once created the wonders of Tahrir and its magical power, but those who skillfully mobilize the mass of ordinary people, including the free riders, in their small towns, farms, factories and unions." The ability of oppositional social forces in constructing inter-/intra-class alliances as well as initiating or reinforcing organizations with strong grassroots credentials will thus be a key factor in any future attempt to challenge the structures of neoliberal hegemony *and* avoid political relapses that could reproduce these structures.

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Part II
Turkey's Relations with Middle Eastern Powers After the Arab Spring

Chapter 6
Political Chaos in Iraq, ISIS, and Turkish Foreign Policy: The High Cost of the Westphalian Delusion

Hüseyin Işıksal

The political chaos in Iraq is *not* a contemporary phenomenon, and it was prevalent in the country prior to the recent global attention focused on the emergence of the radical Islamist group, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (hereafter ISIS). Moreover, it requires the elucidation of various dynamics and challenges, deriving from both the internal and external dynamics of the Middle East in the form of not only political- but also religious-, cultural-, economic-, and identity-related factors. Similarly, any analysis that disregards the problematic state formation, artificial borders, legitimacy problem, paradox of the Westphalian principles in the Middle East, and negative impact of the deceptive Orientalist discourse on the international relations (IR) literature would be unable to provide convincing and sufficient answers to this sophisticated problem. Therefore, analyzing the emergence of ISIS as an independent variable is comparable to focusing on "mosquitoes" without taking the "swamp" into consideration.

This study analyzes the recent political chaos in Iraq, the factors that enabled ISIS to rise, and the position of Turkey within this chaos. For this purpose, initially, the problematic state formation and the "problem of state" in the Middle East are conceptualized. This is beneficial in order to elaborate on the problematical political framework in the Middle East that has significantly contributed to the rise of ISIS and the current turmoil in Iraq. In the second part of the study, the emergence and the rise of ISIS is examined by focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of the militant group. In the final section, the role and position of Turkey in this chaos is briefly explained by underlining the successes and failures of Turkish foreign policy in Iraq regarding its confrontation with ISIS.

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The Westphalian Delusion and the Problem of "State" in the Middle East

The expansion of international society and the successful application of the Westphalian international order to the Arab Middle East are taken for granted within the mainstream IR discourse. However, Westphalian principles are fundamentally clashing with the pre-existing political norms and practices in the region. Accordingly, this fact alone represents one of the principal reasons behind the current political chaos in Iraq. Without elucidating the Westphalian fallacy and the problematic state formation in the Arab Middle East, it is not possible to truly comprehend the roots of contemporary problems in the region.

In the contemporary world, sovereignty is one of the most important and key concepts in international politics. Sovereign statehood remains the only way a polity can be possibly recognized as an "agent" within the international arena. It becomes a kind of "license from the international community to practice as an independent government in a particular territory" (Kratochwil 1986, p. 27). Sovereignty is a private world into which the outside world is not permitted to enter (Taylor 1999, p. 538). This elevates *sovereign* to be the supreme lawmaking authority subject to no other. In symbolic terms, the Protestant challenge and the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, which settled the Thirty Years' War, are generally regarded as a milestone for the emergence of modern state sovereignty. After the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), the European monarchs had reached a consensus that papal ecclesiastical authority over their lands and people should be limited. Deriving from this main objective, the European monarchs established and promoted the Westphalian state system under four main principles:[1]

1. *Territoriality*. The European rulers reached the consensus that they have the right to define their geographical boundaries and the right to rule their people, free from the interference of the pope or any other authority. In other words, territoriality ensured that monarchs should have unrestricted control over their people and landscape. In this manner, the first delimitation in terms of borderlines was established.
2. *Secularity*. The monarchs agreed that they have the right to govern their territories with their own constitution and rules, independent from religious dogmas and authority. It was envisioned that the religious affairs should be separated from the affairs of the state. With the principle of secularity, the monarchs aimed to break the effective power of the pope on their authority.
3. *Sovereign equality*. The European monarchs compromised on paper that, although they had differing power and influence, all the states should conduct foreign relations with the other states on an equal basis. It was claimed that,

[1]For detailed examination of the Westphalian order and sovereignty, see Sørensen (2001), Walker and Mendlowitz (1991), and Tilly (1975).

regardless of their size, population, territory, and power, all the rulers enjoyed a rough equality in their relations.

4. *Nonintervention*. Finally, the monarchs declared that they had the right to determine their own forms of government and the right to exclude external actors from domestic authority. In other words, regardless of their power, each state should respect the sovereign rights and not "interfere" in the internal affairs of other states. The principle of nonintervention referred to both political and religious independence of the monarchs from the other monarchs in terms of controlling their people and landscape. Consequently, the monarchs ensured that they could effectively rule their territory without any interference.

In the post-Peace of Westphalia era, the concept of the "sovereign state" became the privileged epistemological entity of the international system. The idea of the "ultimate sovereign authority" was initially consolidated in Europe, and then the Westphalian model was transferred to other regions throughout the world via the colonization process. Following the end of European colonial rule after World War II, state formation and nation-building processes were initiated in the Middle East. With the establishment of the state system, territorial-based cultural, political, socioeconomic, and normative principles were forcefully maintained over transnational identities such as pan-Arabism and Islamism. In consequence, the Arab Middle East encountered a systemic change through the creation of the newly emerged Arab states and Israel in the postwar era.

Nevertheless, there is a foundational clash between the Westphalian principles and Middle Eastern realities. The Westphalian principles were implemented to manage inter-European politics only, and this context was inherently different from the Middle Eastern political foundations. As noted by Tibi (1990, p. 27), neither internal sovereignty, with its conception of citizenship, national identity, and loyalty, nor external sovereignty, with its idea of the mutual recognition of boundaries and authority over that territory, has a real counterpart in Arab-Islamic history.

In terms of territoriality, the Westphalian state system is differentiated from the transnational Arab Middle Eastern system by the division of the Arab nation. Arab society's historicity has been fundamentally neglected, and entirely new concepts have been planted in the Arab Middle East. These new concepts, such as international boundaries and national identities, are clashing with the established traditional political realities of the Arab people that had lived together as one united unit for centuries. The Arab nation has been ruled as a single entity for more than 1300 years under the Rashidun, Umayyad, and Abbasid Caliphates, as well as the Ottoman Empire. At this point, it is important to note that the various transnational identities and loyalties of the Arab people also rendered the *territoriality* principle null and void. As discussed in greater detail below, Islam, with its transnational character, remains the fundamental element in the national identity of Arabs. Similarly, the tribal, sectarian, and ethnic loyalties that are not limited by a defined territory conflict with the idea of territoriality. In summary, the transnational characteristics of Arab identity, the overlapping boundaries, loyalties, and roles,

all challenge the very core of the Westphalian sovereignty in the Middle East. Gause III (1999, p. 22), Barnett (1998), and Matar and Hilal (1983) even suggested that these transnational standings, which challenge sovereignty as the organizing principle in the Arab Middle East accounts, are unique.

Evidently, among all the Westphalian principles, *secularity* is the most conflicting for the Middle East. There is a special link between Islam and the Arab identity that forms a sort of uniqueness and distinctiveness for the Arab world. This is due to the fact that the Prophet Mohammed was an Arab, and the holy *Quran* was revealed in Arabic in the seventh century. Islam is a religion that was conceived within the Arab culture and is a unifying ideology in the same manner as Medieval Christianity (Ismael and Ismael 1999, p. 130). The Islamic principles have rested upon a transnational political loyalty and solidarity since the seventh century, which is called *Ummah* (community).

Ummah was formed as a response to the revelation granted to the Prophet Muhammad. With the emergence of *Ummah*, at least in theory, the Arabs' supreme tribal loyalty has transformed into the new and supreme Islamic identity, with the exclusion of all others (*min dun an-nas*) (Ahsen 2004, p. 79). *Ummah* could be simply defined as "the Islamic sense of the world and the role people play in it is inextricably bound up with the community that accepts this sense as part its self-definition" (Ahsen 2004, p. 79). Therefore, it refers to the political community of Muslims bound together through a common faith that transcends all geographical, political, or national boundaries. Islamic *Ummah* recognizes no state boundaries or secular or sovereign principles. Stated in different words, in Islamic *Ummah*, loyalty belongs neither to a monarch or a state but to God's law and responsibility toward God. Thus, it would be correct to argue that, throughout history, Islamic identity has been religious since the *Ummah*'s basic philosophical and emotional support emanated from the religious faith. In support of this argument, even after the establishment of the state system and sovereignty, Islam has retained official status in the constitutions and legal codifications of Arab countries. In all the Arab countries, *Sharia* law forms either the basis of the legal system, or the civil law is interpreted in accordance with the *Sharia* law. This demonstrates that, although the state system has been consolidated within the Arab regional system, Islam remains an important aspect of politics and social life.

Thus, the separation of religious affairs from the affairs of the state is not completely possible within the Arab world. Islam is not only a religion but also a doctrine that encompasses all aspects of life. In other words, Islam in the Arab world differs from religion in Western society because it dominates the daily life through its obligations, and it provides transnational loyalty and identity to the Arab societies. It is also an important part of socialization and affects personal status. As such, Islamic ideology has inevitably shaped the political configuration of the region since the postcolonial era, particularly by maintaining internal legitimacy. For this reason, Hudson (1995, pp. 563–564) notes that both the government and the opposition in Muslim countries endeavor to find political legitimacy within the *Sharia law*. Consequently, political Islam appears as the common denominator and the most popularly rooted oppositional force within the Middle East. The successes

of Islamic parties in free and fair general elections held within the Arab world support this argument. The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) won the first multiparty elections in Algeria since independence in 1990. The FIS achieved a clear victory by earning more than 54% of the votes with an aggressive Islamic and Arabic campaign (Tlemçani 1990). Hezbollah's consistent electoral victories in Lebanon and Hamas' electoral victories in Palestine also could be interpreted from the same perspective.

In more contemporary times, the Muslim Brotherhood won electoral victories in both the Egyptian parliamentary election of 2011–2012 and the 2012 Egyptian presidential elections where Mohamed Morsi was chosen as the fifth Egyptian president. Similarly, the Islamist Bloc that was led by the Salafist al-Nour Party came second in the 2011–2012 Egyptian elections with 28% of the votes. One other Islamist Party, the Ennahda Movement, won the 2011 Tunisian Constituent Assembly Election with 40%, which was considered to be the first free and fair election in the country's history. Therefore, it is clear that religion and politics are inseparable in the Arab Middle East. The interactive and interconnected nature of religion and politics has remained constant throughout the centuries. Resultantly, Islam, with its transnational character, remains as the fundamental element in the national identity of Arabs and possesses an important political role in the region. This fact contradicts with the secularity principle of the Westphalian state system, which orders the elimination of religious codes and laws (secularity) (Buzan and Little 1999, p. 90). As progressively summarized by Sami Zubaida, the notion of a territorial state with individualized citizenship, secular law, and principles of sovereignty is alien to the "Muslim mind" (Zubaida 1993, pp. 130–131).

In the same vein, the Westphalian principles of *sovereign*, *equality*, and *nonintervention* do not harmonize with the Arab Middle East. Practically, it is impossible to expect the influential Arab leaders to demonstrate equal respect and accept the "sovereign equality" of their newly emerged artificial counterparts. This reality, for instance, progressively explains the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, which in fact was the fourth occupation of the country by Iraq. The first occupation occurred in 1961, when Britain granted independence to Kuwait. Then, Iraq once more invaded Kuwait in 1973 and 1976 (Ayoob 1993, p. 45; Carlisle 2007, p. 31). Similarly, Syria's regular political and military interventions and occupation of Lebanon in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, Saudi Arabia's consistent and ongoing political and military interventions in Yemen, and Morocco's military interventions in Western Sahara could be demonstrated as further illustrations of this argument, among many others.

The Westphalian principle of "nonintervention" was equally problematic. The Arab regional system is different from the other regional systems, predominantly because of the dual authority, overlapping identities, roles, and loyalties. In other words, Middle Eastern states are politically dependent to each other, due to sectarian, tribal, and family ties across geographic boundaries. These bonds could become more powerful than expected because of the weakness in the attachment to the state and the "lack of sanctity" of political borders "whose history goes back only recently" (Matar and Hilal 1983, p. 62; Barnett 1998, p. 30).

The interconnection between the Arab states is more than simple geographical proximity because, as suggested by Gause III (1999, p. 11), the "events in one part of the Middle East have had surprising and unintended consequences in the other parts of the region." This suggests that the commonalities among the sovereign Arab states at the societal level have created a system of *dual authority* in the Arab world, where Arab regimes concern themselves with the balance between their domestic leverage and the Arab-level facts (Hinnebusch 2002, p. 8). In support of this argument, Michael Barnett (1998, p. 60) argues that Arab leaders occupy not only the role of an agent of a sovereign state but also as agents of the wider Arab political community. Therefore, when a strategic decision is required to be taken, the Arab leaders seek social approval from the wider regional Arab community (Barnett 1998, pp. 32–33). The betrayal of these common Arab commitments easily led to the breakdown of the "nonintervention" principle. This becomes particularly visible in the case of the Palestinian issue. In particular, the political interventions in Palestine by Egypt, Jordan, and almost all the other Arab countries could be approached from this perspective.

As a consequence of all these paradoxes, an inevitable clash occurred between transnational Arab identity and the Westphalian principles in the Arab Middle East. In most cases, domestic forces continue to demand and expect different roles other than territorial identity-based statehood. Stating alternatively, state sovereignty and the roles associated with sovereignty are not fully legitimized by societal forces, even in the contemporary era. It is for this reason that Gregory Gause III rightly and significantly claimed that, in the post-World War II era, the clash and tensions between the traditional and Western sovereignty have not been greater than in the Middle East (1992, p. 443). More significantly, as contemporary regional problems confirm in almost every case, the "state" in the European Westphalian definition does not correspond to the Middle Eastern realities, even in the twenty-first century.

The Emergence and the Legacy of Autocratic Regimes

As briefly discussed above, there are fundamental clashes between the Westphalian principles and the Middle Eastern political life. Moreover, the question at the heart of the issue is how did the Middle Eastern rulers emerge as the most strident defenders of the Westphalian principles? Accordingly, the answer to this question is crucial in terms of comprehending the origins and causes of the contemporary problems, both in Iraq and in the wider region. The mainstream international relations literature frequently ignores the fact that contemporary boundaries in the Middle East were created according to the needs and perceived interests of the Europeans, rather than those of local populations (Razi 1990, p. 82). The Middle East has been divided into nation states irrespective of any traditional, ethnic, and religious criteria. In this sense, many people living in the Middle East still have no sense of state-based loyalty. In other words, the Middle East is marked by high incongruity between national identity and sovereignty. As also underlined by

Hinnebusch, arbitrary borders and loyalty to the individual states are "contested by sub state and suprastate identities" (2002, p. 7). In consequence, the society's historicity has been completely neglected, and entirely new concepts have been planted in the Arab Middle East such as international boundaries, national identities, national military force, and police forces.

As mentioned previously, sovereignty acts as a shield for a private world, into which the "outsiders" are not permitted to enter. There is little doubt that it was this characteristic that was most tempting to the rulers of the Arab Middle East. Stating in different words, the Middle Eastern rulers emerged as the most strident defenders of the Westphalian system, because it offers them "unfettered" control over their internal affairs and over their domestic population. Therefore, the Westphalian systems directly or indirectly contributed to the autocratic structure in the Middle East, simply because it is not the "people" but the sovereign "states" that are accepted as the members of international society. The state is designed to control the society rather than vice versa (Findlay 1994, pp. 65–66). Simply, the state system provides limitless control to the central authorities in domestic politics and internationally legitimizes the tools and practices of the modern state. In particular, the allure of using the privileges of state mechanisms and the right to resort to "legitimate violence" against their people became integral parts of many regimes.

In this respect, as also commented by various regional experts, the recognition of sovereignty by international society in the Arab Middle East "allows corrupt, irresponsible, and incompetent governments to violate the rights and welfare of their population" (Inayatullah 1996, p. 61). In other words, with the establishment of the state system in the Middle East, Arab regimes have seized the unique opportunity to put their autocratic discourse into practical applications. The regimes could thus do anything in order to stay in power. The Westphalian principles are satisfying all the needs of the Arab ruling elites, without the requirement to establish democratic principles in their countries. The inevitable result of such a problematic state formation process is a legitimacy problem. Technically speaking, legitimacy could be simply defined as the righteousness of the ruler. Therefore, the "success" of sovereignty has been achieved at the expense of certain costs. The bipolar international system and the Cold War rivalries, along with the Arab-Israeli Wars, enabled the Middle Eastern rulers to further justify their autocratic regimes. In consequence, a strong status quo was formed in the Middle East by powerful extra-regional powers and the local collaborator regimes that are in control of their populations.

Iraq is not an exception to all these interrelated dynamics. During the interwar era rule, the British sowed the roots of disunity and chaos in Iraq for more than 30 years. Through the traditional "divide and rule" colonial policy in particular, the British created a vacuum between the political groups and the ethnic minorities. Iraq became a League of Nations mandate under British control in 1920. The British designated Faisal, son of Hussein bin Ali, as the king of Iraq in 1921. Hussein, an influential member of the Hashemite family who was the Sharif of Mecca, initiated the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire in 1916 with the support of the British. As a result of this loyalty, the Hashemite family was rewarded with three different

kingdoms. Hussein became King of the Hejaz, his third son Faisal became King of Iraq, and his second son Abdullah became the King of Jordan.

Inevitably, the Iraqi Sunni Hashemite Kingdom under the British protectorate was challenged by the Shi'a, Kurdish, Assyrian, and Yazidi revolts that were suppressed brutally (Wells and Bruzonsky 1987, p. 9). For instance, thousands of Assyrians were killed in the Simele massacre in 1933; a series of coordinated Kurdish, Shi'a, and Yazidi uprisings were cruelly suppressed in 1935–1936; and a Kurdish rebellion for independence led by Mustafa Barzani was crushed in 1941. In terms of the domestic struggle for power, the first military coup took place in Iraq in 1936, which was also the first military coup in the Arab world (Anderson and Stansfield 2004, p. 18). After the 1936 coup, the country experienced six more military coups until 1941. Therefore, as also commented by Anderson and Stansfield (2004, p. 18), the 1936 coup marked the beginning of an era where violent transfers of power became the rule rather than the exception.

The turbulence also continued in the post-World War II era. In 1948, massive violent protests, known as the Al-Wathbah uprising, occurred in the capital Baghdad. The main reason for this uprising was a protest against the treaty that was signed by the kingdom with Great Britain. This revolt was only able to be suppressed by the declaration of martial law (Polk 2006, p. 4). As a continuation of this trend, a popular nationalist revolution led by General Abdel Karim Qasim overthrew the Hashemite monarchy on July 14, 1958 (Hahn 2005, p. 17). In this revolution, King Faisal the Second, members of the royal family including Crown Prince Abdullah, and the pro-Western Prime Minister Nuri Said were all murdered (Munro 2006, p. 3).

Qasim's government played an important role in the establishment of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 1960 that aimed to resist the power of Western oil monopolies (Clark 1994, p. 4; Polk 2006, p. 126). Qasim nationalized the USA-/British-owned Iraqi Petroleum Company under the slogan of "Arab oil for the Arabs" (Marr 1985, p. 163). He also withdrew Iraq from the pro-Western Baghdad Pact and established friendly relations with the Soviet Union. As a response to all these policies, shortly after the 1958 revolution, the CIA formed a committee including regional actors to plan the assassination of Qasim (Clark 1994, p. 4). In 1963, Qasim and thousands of his supporters were massacred in a bloody CIA-backed military coup. At this point, it is important to note that, a short period before this operation, the CIA and the British organized another military coup in August 1953 in neighboring Iran against the democratically elected Prime Minister Mossadegh. Similar to the Iraqi case, the main reason behind that "operation" was Mossadegh's decision to nationalize and control the oil industry in Iran.

In summary, the 30-year British rule and the political turmoil that ensued constructed a political legacy where resorting to violence became the main preference for solving political problems in Iraq. The July 1958 revolution, in particular, set a pattern for political turbulence and bloodshed that has characterized the politics of Iraq ever since. During the Saddam Hussein era, the external wars further contributed to this legacy. The country has experienced considerable armed conflict

in recent years, such as the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988), Saddam's invasion of Kuwait (1990), the Operation Desert Storm and the first occupation of Iraq (1991), the second occupation of Iraq, and the removal of Saddam Hussein from power in 2004. All these wars contributed to the political tradition in Iraq where resorting to violence seem normal, inevitable, and even necessary.

The Failed State and the Rise of ISIS

Thus far, this study has analyzed how the Westphalian principles were distorted in the Middle East and how this delusion led to the emergence of autocratic regimes in countries such as Iraq. These developments paved the way for a strong legacy where resorting to violence against the constitutional order and the transfer of power through illegitimate means became the modus operandi. This historical background is significant for comprehending the rise of ISIS. As discussed in greater detail below, in addition to the problematic state and the nation-building processes in the Middle East, the particular problems related to Iraq led to the upsurge of ISIS. Therefore, it would not be wrong to suggest that ISIS has emerged as a result of both external- and domestic-related dynamics.

ISIS originated from the al-Qaeda-affiliated al-Nusra Front under the leadership of the Jordanian extremist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in 1999. In January 2006, the group changed its name to the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) after merging with several smaller groups and named Abu Omar al-Baghdadi as its leader. The ISI was merely a faction among hundreds of other armed groups in Iraq and Syria. In April 2013, al-Baghdadi moved to Syria with members of the former Ba'athist intelligence service and military officers following the collapse of civil order in the country. After this move, the group immediately began to develop into a well-organized armed force in control of large populated areas in Syria. The ISI reconstituted itself in Iraq after Prime Minister Maliki had defunded and disbanded the Sunni militias in the country. In relation to this, the ISI changed its name to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/al Sham (ISIL or ISIS) in order to reveal its interests in both Iraq and Syria. "Al Sham" symbolizes the wider region of Syria, an area that includes Syria, Lebanon, parts of Turkey, and Jordan. It is the historical Islamic and Ottoman term used to identify this area of the Middle East. The Levant instead is the English version and a rather outdated term for the same area.

From June 2014 onwards, ISIS targeted the conquest of the entire Middle East with no limit to its frontiers. Al-Baghdadi proclaimed himself as the Caliph, which refers to the rule of the whole Islamic world. To underscore this claim, ISIS made a final modification to its name and changed it to the "Islamic State" (IS).[2] ISIS even

[2]The organization has many names ranging from the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) to Daesh. Most recently, the organization has named itself as the Islamic State (IS) by claiming that it has no frontiers in the Middle East. In this study, I prefer to use "ISIS" instead of any other names,

captured Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city, in the summer of 2014 without any serious fighting against Iraqi security forces. By the end of August, ISIS had captured a third of Iraqi territory. In this way, the armed group obtained more territory than any jihadist organization in history (Cockburn 2015). The Sunni tribal area under ISIS control covered a vast area from the shores of the Mediterranean Sea in Syria to the heart of Iraq (Jasper and Moreland 2014). The armed group has also been widely defined as the wealthiest and deadliest terrorist organization in history (McCoy 2014). Strong financial reserves that are derived from oil smuggling, bank robberies, ransom money, and imposed taxes have enabled ISIS to hire new recruits. All these findings demonstrate that ISIS is posing a significant threat to peace and stability in the region.

As discussed in depth in the previous sections theorizing the state in the Arab Middle East, two interrelated points are worth emphasizing, since these are significant for understanding the contemporary chaos in Iraq. First, the concept of state in the Middle East is different than the European understanding, both in shape and function. The state has its limits, particularly in terms of nationhood, loyalty, and citizenship. The failure of the state mechanisms enhanced the religious and ethnic-based schisms. Secondly, in connection with the first point, the absence of any democratic institutionalization automatically leads to the legitimacy problem. Due to the lack of the required institutional framework to attain popular legitimacy, Middle Eastern rulers widely used tribal or religion-based legitimacy. People are not respected as "individuals" but as members of some larger regional, ethnic, or religious collectivity. Stating alternatively, the failure of citizenship and individual rights force people to attach themselves to their ethnic and religious groups to ensure their security and well-being.

Deriving from these points, the initial factor that led to the emergence of ISIS could be explained as the "failed state" and sectarian strife in Iraq. Contrary to Saddam's era where Sunnis were in power, large masses of Sunni people were ignored, marginalized, and excluded from the state services, particularly during Prime Minister al-Maliki's era (2006–2014). The sectarian government and Maliki's polarizing and repressive policies toward Iraq's Sunni population stand as one of the main factors behind the rise of ISIS. After becoming the Prime Minister in 2006, Maliki disregarded his promises to share power with other political groups and attempted to eliminate the power base of the Sunnis. In this way, he upset the delicate political balance between the Sunni and Shi'a in Iraq. Maliki initially suspended the Sunnis from state security services and then expanded his sectarian campaign to other state services. He arrested popular Sunni leaders, who he declared as "enemies of the state" (Khedery 2014). In this context, Maliki even arrested the Sunni Vice-President, Tariq al-Hashimi.

These measures resulted in mass demonstrations in the Sunni areas. The tension further escalated when the government asymmetrically intervened in these

since the main operating area of the armed group is in Iraq and Syria and it does not rule any territory elsewhere in the region.

demonstrations. As a consequence, the sectarian strife in Iraq led to the marginalization of the population, particularly in the Sunni-concentrated areas in the northern and Western regions of Iraq. This facilitated ISIS' collaboration with ex-Baathists and Sunni tribal leaders on reassembling the various militias who desired to retaliate against al-Maliki's policies. ISIS was able to cooperate with local Sunni tribal leaders and Saddam's veteran soldiers by using their sectarian identity. Therefore, ISIS emerged as a strong political and military actor, mainly because it offered protection to the Sunni population where the other Sunni groups had failed to do so against the Shi'a regime (Cosgrove 2014, p. 100). ISIS successfully exploited the marginalization of the Sunnis and the long-lasting sectarian enmity between Sunni and Shi'a. As an unfortunate fact, as also highlighted by Aron Miller (2014), under the current conditions, the Shi'a-dominated Iraqi government cannot offer better governance and economic opportunities to Sunni people than ISIS. Additionally, the armed group's anti-Shi'a nature also secures financial and political support from other dynasties, groups, and wealthy individuals, particularly from the Gulf States that viewed ISIS' war on the Shi'a as a "holy war" (Cockburn 2015). Thus, the ISIS' sectarian-based brutal campaign also helped the armed group to secure donations from the other Sunni states.

A secondary factor that enabled the emergence of ISIS is the US occupations of Iraq and the subsequent exploitation of the sense of victimization by ISIS. The US-led coalition occupied Iraq twice, in both 1991 and 2003. These developed a sense of victimization, particularly among the Sunni population. In both occupations, Iraq was subjected to the most intensive aerial bombardment ever seen in history (Malore 2006, p. 128). In the first occupation that was called "Operation Desert Storm," around 110,000 aircraft sorties dropped over 90,000 tons of bombs on Iraq (Brune 1993, p. 108; Clark 1994, p. 40; Polk 2006, p. 151). More dramatically, the USA hit civilian targets. The targets included almost all the economic infrastructure in the predominantly Sunni areas of Iraqi society, such as clean water systems and water pumping stations, communication and transportation systems, electric power grids, and even hospitals and schools. As a result of the heavy and asymmetric bombing, 70% of Iraq's infrastructure was destroyed (Jansen 1992, p. 8). Electricity supply was reduced to 15%, 50% of the water supply was polluted, and 65% of the oil refineries were bombed and rendered dysfunctional (Jansen 1992, p. 8). Hawley (1992) argued that the US army intentionally attacked and destroyed Iraq's food production sources that would impact the Iraqi people for many generations. Hawley (1992) added that most of the destroyed agricultural irrigation lands can no longer be cultivated because of the high level of chemical lead in the soil.

It is estimated that 200,000 Iraqi soldiers (predominantly Sunni) were killed in 1991 during the operation alone (London Times 1991). The actual number of civilians that were killed is still unknown. Nonetheless, the United Nations-based embargo and sanctions that were employed after the first occupation were more fatal. The embargo blocked many foods, simple medicines, and a wide variety of chemicals for water purification (London Times 1991). Thousands of children died due to basic diseases and waterborne diseases. UNICEF reports estimated that

between 1991 and 1998, around 500,000 children under the age of 5 died because of cholera or typhoid. These diseases had been eradicated before 1990 and are easily preventable through vaccines. Additionally, Ben-Meir (1996, p. 67) estimated that nearly 600,000 Iraqi children have died from malnutrition since the end of the second Gulf War. Based on these figures, the number of casualties between 1991 and 1999 could be as high as 2 million people (Archer 1993, p. 24).

Bearing many similarities to the first occupation, the burden of the second Iraqi occupation in 2003 was also heavy. An estimated 700,000 Iraqi civilians and 4000 Iraqi soldiers lost their lives (El-Shibiny 2010, p. 6). The total cost of the war was over $300 billion. Two and a half million Iraqis were forced to leave their homes for other parts of Iraq, and another one and a half million fled to neighboring countries (El-Shibiny 2010, p. 6). As commented by James Dobbins (2004, p. 182), America's so-called humanitarian intervention became a "humanitarian disaster" simply because over 4 million Iraqis (which refer to more than 16% of the population) lost their homes and became refugees. It is conceivable that the ultimate military victory for the US-led coalition could still have been achieved without the destruction of the entire infrastructure and high number of civilian casualties in both occupations. Furthermore, the declaration of the "Safe Haven" that prohibited all Iraqi forces from passing north of the 36th parallel created a de facto independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq. Similarly, a "no-fly zone" to the south of the 32nd parallel protected the Shi'a areas from the aforementioned mass destruction. In this way, Iraq's sovereignty has been seriously paralyzed by international powers led by the USA.

In this context, many Sunni Arabs believe that the Shi'a-Kurd alliance was created by the USA at the expense of their own communities (Economist 2014). ISIS narratives frequently emphasize these facts and repeatedly refer to the victimization of the Sunni at the hands of Shi'a, Kurds, and the West (Rand and Heras 2015). Furthermore, the exposition of human right crimes, abuses, and torture against Iraqi civilians and prisoners both during and after the 2003 occupation has been exploited by ISIS to promote anti-Western sentiments and to justify the violent campaigns of the armed group. There is no doubt that radical organizations like ISIS have developed a pragmatic link between ideology and the daily concerns and fears of the people. This enables the armed groups to abuse the perceptions behind the failure of state mechanisms in particular and the problems of modernity in general by attracting sympathizers and supporters around the world. Considering the large numbers of people who have joined ISIS from Europe, it is evident that the organization is effective at attracting alienated and marginalized people in many countries around the world.

ISIS also exploits religion when attracting new members. The group has its own radical understanding of Islam. In order to link ISIS' fight with ideology, al-Baghdadi initially claimed that he is a descendant of Prophet Mohammed (Sekulow and Sekulow 2014, pp. 15–17). Then, he declared himself to be the Caliph, a significant symbol of universal Islamic authority, which many Sunni people had desired to restore since it had been abolished by the Turkish Grand National Assembly on March 24, 1924. After declaring himself as the new Caliph,

al-Baghdadi claimed the right to declare *Jihad* (Islamic holy war) in order to establish a unified Islamic state in the Middle East.

The final set of reasons that led to the rise of ISIS is related to the institutionalization of violence in the region. As mentioned above, the region has experienced so much armed conflict that contributed to the military legacy in Iraq. Resorting to violence seems to be normal, inevitable, and necessary, even in the transfer of the political power. This has both domestic and regional implications. In terms of regional implications, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict continued to provide moral support and power for ISIS in many respects. As proposed by many scholars, this conflict maintained and justified the political hegemony, authoritarianism, and the use of violence by the Middle Eastern regimes (Abootalebi 1999; Ahrari 1996; Ajami 1992; Korany et al. 1993; Miller 1986). Israeli aggression and its asymmetric use of force against the Palestinians were not only effectively exploited by ISIS but also used as a justification for resorting to military force in the region. The USA's one-sided support for Israel further worsens the situation. For instance, as a member of the Security Council, the USA has exercised its veto power to protect Israel and has blocked the enforcement of the UN Security Council resolutions calling for the withdrawal of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories. The "internalization" of political violence in the region not only strengthens the support for ISIS at the ideological level but also helps the armed group to justify its extreme brutality and harsh penalties. There is no doubt that ISIS is more brutal than al-Qaeda. In addition to committing mass murders of members of other groups, the armed group has also executed hundreds of foreigners that attempted to leave the organization or join other groups (*The Guardian* 2014).

Having discussed the emergence and the factors behind the rise of ISIS, a final remark should underline the fundamental weaknesses of ISIS that will diminish, if not completely eradicate, the armed group's power in the short term. Firstly, ISIS' extraordinary brutality and barbarity has made enemies of not only the smaller non-Sunni ethnic groups, such as the Kurds, Alawites, Yazidis, and Maronites, but also among the Sunni groups that do not approve of ISIS' modus operandi, involving brutal methods. Secondly, ISIS' alliance with other Iraqi Sunni groups, including the former Ba'athists, is a temporary coalition consolidated by a common enmity against the Shi'a-dominated central government. In other words, Saddam's secular forces and ISIS formed an "unholy alliance." It is a well-known fact that Saddam Hussein and the vast majority of his senior ranked soldiers were secular people that effectively ruled Iraq through secular principles. Therefore, ISIS' ideology, brutality, and desire to implement *Sharia* law over the people under its control will ultimately clash with the secular Sunni groups that have different agendas. Thirdly, and most importantly, ISIS does not have a clear ally in the region while it is fighting with almost every other actor in the area. The armed group is fighting against many enemies and has magnified its military campaign across multiple fronts. For example, ISIS is fighting with the organized Turkish military forces; Iran supported Iraqi central government forces, the PKK–PYD, the Hezbollah militants, the Kurdish Regional Government Peshmergas, Assad's official Syrian army, and the US-Turkish-supported Syrian opposition forces on

the battleground. Moreover, it is occasionally attacked by Russian air forces as well as Sunni Arab states including Jordan, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.

Turkish Foreign Policy and ISIS

Syria remained as the only neighboring Arab state that confronted Israel in the region. A peace treaty has still not been signed between Israel and Syria, simply because the strategic Golan Heights are still under the occupation of Israel. The Assad regime refuses to recognize the Israeli annexation of Golan Heights. Furthermore, Syria is the most important strategic ally of anti-Western Russia and Iran. Because of these reasons, the USA and its allies would like to see a regime change in Syria. The collapse of the Assad regime is necessary in order to reduce Iran's influence in the region. These factors have made Turkey a "reliable" partner for the Western world at the beginning of the Syrian conflict, because of the AKP's opposition to Bashar al-Assad's regime and its support for the Syrian opposition.

Nevertheless, Turkish decision makers failed to calculate how the Syrian conflict could destabilize Turkey. The Syrian crisis left a dangerous vacuum that was filled by ISIS and other terrorist organizations. The small but relatively well-armed and equipped military force as well as its war tactics has made ISIS a major opposition force in Syria. As the Syrian conflict intensified, Turkey was faced with two new neighbors that posed more threat to the country than the Assad regime: the Democratic Union Party (Kurdish *Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat*, hereafter PYD) and ISIS. After the Syrian conflict, an offshoot of the separatist Kurdish terrorist organization PKK–PYD controlled Syria's Kurdish areas. Similarly, ISIS occupied some territory on Turkey's southern border. Consequently, a large proportion of the 800 km Turkish-Syrian border is controlled by the two terrorist organizations that have conducted many terrorist activities on Turkish soil.

Turkish foreign policy makers have differed from their Western allies over the main threats in Syria and Iraq. Although the key threat is clearly ISIS for the latter, Turkey consistently contends that, in addition to ISIS, the PKK–PYD and al-Assad's regime are the main threats in the region. For the USA, both the Kurds and the PKK are reliable partners in the region. They proved their loyalty to the USA during the occupation of Iraq in 2003 by fighting alongside the coalition forces against Saddam Hussein. One other reason that makes the Kurds and the PKK viable partners is the security of Israel. Israel's security is among the main objectives of the USA in the Middle East. For this purpose, the US policy makers have been searching for a non-Arab regional ally in the region since the establishment of Israel in 1948. During the Shah era, Iran successfully fulfilled this role. Nevertheless, after the Islamic Revolution in 1979, a stable non-Arab ally has still not been found by the USA. For example, the domestic establishment in Lebanon does not allow the Maronites to dictate their political will to the Muslims. Similarly, Turkey, under the AKP government, is not perceived as a reliable partner, particularly after the "One

Minute"[3] and Mavi Marmara[4] incidents that seriously curtailed Turkish-Israeli relations. Because of this divergence, Turkey has been accused by President Obama and other officials in Washington of being a reluctant partner in the fight with ISIS (Barkey 2015). Although there was no proof, Turkish National Intelligence Service was even accused of providing supplies to ISIS (Cumhuriyet 2014).

The devastating suicide attack by ISIS in Suruç, a southern town in Turkey at the Syrian border, on July 20, 2015, that killed 34 people was a turning point for Turkey's attitude toward ISIS. This event alerted the Turkish decision makers that ISIS had become a formidable threat for Turkey as well. In the aftermath of the attack, the Turkish government decided to militarily engage with ISIS, both in Iraq and Syria. Initially, Turkey allowed the US forces to use the İncirlik American Air Base in Adana and the Diyarbakır Air Base to strike ISIS targets in July 2015. Several days later, the Turkish Air Force also initiated strikes against ISIS targets. This was followed by the arrests of numerous ISIS members and the shutdown of ISIS-related media and organizations in Turkey. At least 1200 ISIS members were arrested in 2015 alone (Yeğinsu 2015). Interestingly, even these moves were not welcomed by Western media and certain Turkish circles, supported by the claim that Turkey's fight with ISIS is merely an opportunity to fight with the PKK.[5] Arguably, the anti-Erdoğan camp, both in Turkey and abroad, intentionally fabricated this view in order to weaken the Turkish government.

Contrary to this claim, Turkey's response to ISIS dragged the country into an era of terror under the threat of PKK and ISIS terrorists. In 2015, the deadliest terror attack in Turkey's history resulted in the killing of 103 civilians in the central train station bombing in the capital city, Ankara. Similarly, 13 people were killed in ISIS' Sultanahmet attack in January 2016, and another 39 were killed in a club shooting on New Year's Eve of 2017, both in Turkey's main city Istanbul. These attacks clearly demonstrated that Turkey is facing a very real security threat, as ISIS were prepared to attack to the heart of the country with a complete disregard for the number of casualties. Turkey immediately responded to these attacks by directly confronting the ISIS forces in Iraq and Syria. Although Turkey's encounter was met with harsh criticisms by the Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, the "Operation Euphrates Shield" was initiated in August 2016 in order to maintain border security and completely eliminate ISIS on Turkish border. The Free Syrian Army (FSA) units and Turkmen forces also provided support to this operation.

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[3]The so-called "One Minute" incident took place at the World Economic Forum Conference in Davos, Switzerland, in January 2009. During the session, the then Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan condemned the Gaza policy and sufferings of Palestinians. In the presence of Shimon Peres, the then Israeli President, Erdoğan, severely criticized Israel with the words "when it comes to killing children, you know well how to kill."

[4]The Mavi Marmara incident took place on May 31, 2010. Nine Turkish activists were killed, and many were wounded by Israeli soldiers as a result of the controversial operation carried out on the Mavi Marmara flotilla in international waters.

[5]See, for instance, Eizenstat and Ozcan (2015).

One other objective of this military operation was to prevent a corridor of terror for the PKK on Turkey's doorstep and to prevent a possible fait accompli state that could be declared by the PYD. Turkish decision makers feared that anti-ISIS operations led by the USA and Russia could make the PYD the only political actor on Turkey's southern border. By the end of 2016, more than 1250 ISIS and 300 PKK/PYD militants had been killed, and more than 2000 km^2 of area had been secured from ISIS and PKK/PYD terrorist groups (Sabah 2016). This means that in only 4 months, ISIS had lost 16% of the territory under its control to Turkish-FSA soldiers (BBC 2017). When the operation was successfully completed on March 29, 2017, the Turkish forces completely controlled the west of the Euphrates River, and the PKK/PYD withdrew to the east of the Euphrates River. Turkey also made it difficult for the PKK/PYD to link the Kobani Canton with the Afrin Canton. Moreover, ISIS forces were completely eliminated from the Turkish-Syrian border, and at least 100,000 Syrian refugees living in Turkey returned back to these areas. On the other hand, as of February 9, 2017, at least 66 Turkish military personnel lost their lives in this operation.

Turkey's direct military confrontation with ISIS presents an interesting dilemma. The USA and its Western allies consistently repeated that ISIS represents a significant threat to regional stability in particular and humanity in general. Therefore, they asserted that ISIS has to be destroyed. However, as the only state on the battlefield, Turkey has not received the required military support from the Western allies, whose attacks on ISIS have been limited to air strikes. In fact, the USA and its allies did not perceive ISIS as a primary threat, since the armed group had been initially fighting against Assad and weakening Iran's influence over Iraq. The so-called Shi'a Crescent extending from Tehran to Beirut was perceived as a serious threat to the traditional Sunni kingdoms in the region by the USA. Since these countries are close allies of the USA and main actors in the Western-inspired regional order, from one point of view, ISIS was also serving their interests.

ISIS began to be perceived as a threat by the USA and its allies when the armed group started to attack the Kurdish region in northern Iraq. This move directly classed with the US interests in the region, simply because, as explained above, the Kurdish groups were perceived as the most reliable US ally in the region. To summarize, although Turkey was accused of being a reluctant actor in the fight with ISIS at the beginning, the events dramatically changed when ISIS began to hit Turkey. Turkish foreign policy makers miscalculated the regional dynamics in Iraq and Syria and paid a high price for this mistake. In this way, Turkey has learned the hard way that the "my enemy's enemy is my friend" principle is not always valid considering the ambiguities of the regional system and the country's neighborhood.

Conclusion

The nation-state model has been compulsory for Arab countries after their independence, mainly due to the absence of any other model. Nevertheless, due to the absence of democracy and the legitimacy problem, the regimes, not the societies, became the sole members of international society. The state system provides limitless control to the central authorities in domestic politics and internationally legitimizes the tools and practices of the modern state. This led to an imaginary victory for the sovereign regimes. Having said this, the "Westphalian delusion" did not change the crucial fact that many Arab Middle Eastern regimes, including Iraq, failed to develop a sense of national identity in European terms. The subnational and transnational sources of identity created a system of dual authority between state and people that still persists today. As a consequence, considering it was already having problems with its demographical limits and the legal justification of its existence, ethnic and religious schisms remain at the very core of the many contemporary problems in the Middle East.

Iraq is a typical case of the aforementioned conceptualization of the Arab state. The failure of the state and the nation-building processes as well as the state-based identity kept the subnational and transnational identities in the form of religious, ethnic, and tribal as the main determinants of polity. The artificial borders, widespread corruption, and bad governance have further fueled the already complicated situation. In particular, the exclusion of the Saddam era remnants of the Sunni's forces from power by the Shi'a Maliki government further escalated the existing chaos. Resultantly, the Iraqi governments failed to build an effective legitimacy for the Sunni population.

ISIS was thus conceived and has achieved a maneuvering area in the region within many failed states. The armed group has successfully exploited the failed elements of the Westphalian delusion and mixes this by frequently resorting to violence. The Western-oriented attempts to understand the emergence of ISIS have many shortcomings, traceable to the limits of approaches that underline violence by disregarding the other reasons behind the groups rise. In other words, the political behavior and actions of ISIS tend to be explained in terms that are familiar to Western rationalism. In this context, the factors that gave rise to ISIS can mostly be explained as strategic moves to obtain power, territory, and economic resources in the chaotic Iraq.

A factor that is not considered or mostly neglected, however, is the problematic Arab state that has had profound limits since its existence. Similarly, the drivers that motivate the Iraqi Sunnis to support ISIS in terms of more autonomous political life are mostly ignored. Most dramatically, the Western world's direct or indirect contribution to the emergence of ISIS has not been mentioned at all. Therefore, many analyses have only focused on "mosquitoes" rather than the "swamp" by ignoring the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the Western support for authoritarian regimes in the region, the Western countries' consistent lack of support for democratically elected Islamist/conservative governments, and the US-led Iraqi

occupations and mass destructions. This suggests that, although ISIS still governs vast areas of Iraq and Syria, the current chaos in the region cannot be solved through military means alone. As this study aims to illustrate, a military solution cannot be sustainable in the long run if the causes and the roots of the crises are not examined completely.

Turkish decision makers have failed to anticipate the high cost of the Westphalian delusion in Iraq and how the regional conflicts could destabilize Turkey. The Iraqi and Syrian crises left a dangerous vacuum that was filled by ISIS and the PKK–PYD. Following the deadly terrorist attacks by ISIS in Turkey's major cities, direct military confrontation with the armed group remained as the only option for Turkey. On March 29, 2017, the Operation Euphrates Shield was successfully completed. The Turkish forces completely controlled the west of the Euphrates River, and the PKK/PYD withdrew to the east of the Euphrates River. Moreover, ISIS forces were completely eliminated from the Turkish-Syrian border. By this way, Turkey avoided the risk of direct encounter with the Russian-backed Syrian government forces. What remains crucial, however, is the ability of Turkish decision makers to convince the Russia-Shi'a-Assad and the US-led anti-ISIS coalitions on Turkey's positions in Iraq and Syria.

As a last word, two concluding remarks are arguably necessary, not only in evaluating the recent political chaos in Iraq but also in analyzing the broader Middle East. Firstly, new critical analyses should focus on *society* rather than *polity*, and political behavior and culture should be examined within the extremely complex network of relationships in the Middle East setting. Secondly, there is a need for the re-identification of the problems, concepts, sub-concepts, typologies, and eventual solutions. Therefore, it is necessary to critically review the existing approaches and evaluations of the "others" from the lenses of the "others" by recognizing and respecting their differences.

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Chapter 7
The Arab Spring and Turkish-Iranian Relations, 2011–2016

Süleyman Elik

The origins of 2011 Arab Spring can be traced to the postcolonial political order that emerged in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region after World War II. Authoritarian regimes dominated all aspects of life in countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya, brutally repressing voices of dissent and preventing the establishment of liberal democratic open societies in the Arab world. Turkish policy-makers believe that long overlooked socioeconomic and political frustrations fueled the unprecedented mobilization of massive crowds across the so-called "Arab street" (i.e., the countries that experienced large-scale protests such as Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, Libya, and Bahrain). Accordingly, Arab Spring was about a popular demand for political change, freedom, and social justice. The protestors aimed to alter the nature of state-society relations via developing a new social contract that would empower the "ordinary citizen" vis-à-vis the elite that controlled authoritarian state mechanisms thus far. As such, the post-2011 Turkish foreign policy toward the Middle East has been shaped by a liberal idealist understanding of the Arab Spring.

Unlike the Turkish approach, Iran's attitude toward MENA after Arab Spring has been characterized by realism and self-interest. The protests completely destabilized the region, and the chaotic atmosphere has been evaluated by Tehran as a valuable opportunity to expand Iranian sphere of influence. Since the beginning of the Syrian Civil War in 2011, Iran has strongly supported the Assad regime's brutal repression of political opposition. Rather than attempting to "Islamize" Arab Spring by empowering Islamist movements across the region, as some initially expected Tehran to do, Iran has shown no signs of adhering to an "Islamic revolution discourse" (Göksel 2013, pp. 160–167). Instead, Shi'a sectarian policies have been followed to fully capture and/or subjugate four key Arab countries: Syria, Iraq,

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Lebanon, and Yemen. By contrast, Ankara has not pursued sectarian policies, and its approach to post-Arab Spring political crises has displayed a “moralist language.” For instance, Turkish policy-makers such as President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan frequently defended Turkey’s open door policy toward Syrian refugees by arguing that it was Turkish people’s moral duty to provide shelter for their coreligionists.

This study focuses on the impact of Arab Spring on Turkish-Iranian relations as well on the regional influence of these countries. The subject is analyzed in terms of three levels: *domestic*, *regional*, and *systemic* (Hinnebusch and Tür-Kavli 2013). The nuclear program of Iran is evaluated as part of the systemic level for the purpose of exploring the balance of power within the regional system and Iranian national ambitions. Kurdish nationalism and the ongoing Syrian Civil War are viewed as part of the regional and domestic levels. In addition, a thematic examination of diplomatic and economic relations between Tehran and Ankara enables the study to check if the Arab Spring has indeed dramatically altered Turkish-Iranian relations.

Turkey and Iran’s Reactions to Arab Spring

In the winter of 2010–2011, massive public protests shook the authoritarian regimes of the Arab world one by one, and their success in overthrowing incumbent governments of Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya shocked the Western world as well as regional powers such as Turkey and Iran (Demi̇r and Rijnoveanu 2013). These civil disobedience movements rapidly became the most influential transformative forces seen in the Arab world since the decolonization period of the late 1940s and early 1950s (Lynch 2014). The social protests have created new opportunities as well as new challenges for major regional powers (i.e., Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey).

It can be argued that Arab Spring was a unique opportunity for Turkey to promote democracy and spread its cultural influence in the region, but the political turbulence caused by the protests has seriously damaged Turkish economy and national security. Due to the entry of millions of Syrian refugees (estimates range from 2.5 to 3.5 million), security problems within Turkey have escalated as members of the terrorist organization *Daesh*/the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have also infiltrated the country disguised as refugees (İçduygu 2015; AFAD 2015). While the Syrian crisis has been most damaging, Turkish economy has also suffered economic losses due to political crises in Yemen, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt because numerous Turkish companies (especially those in textile and construction industries) had investments—most notably in Libya and Egypt—in these countries prior to Arab Spring (Öncel and Malik 2015, pp. 24–31).

Syria was particularly important for Turkey’s economic relations with MENA, because Turkish exports were mostly distributed across the region via land transportation over Syrian territory. Hence, the outbreak of Syrian Civil War and the subsequent deterioration of Turkish-Syrian relations have cost dearly for Turkey by resulting in the loss of this crucial trade gateway. Since the Arab Spring, Turkey’s

economic influence over—and relations with—Syria, Libya, and Egypt has worsened (Sümer 2013). At the beginning of the street protests in 2011, Turkey initially encouraged its erstwhile allies (the Qaddafi and Assad regimes) to undertake political reforms while opposing direct military intervention on behalf of opposition movements. However, once it became clear in May 2011 that NATO was going to launch a military operation against Qaddafi, Turkey amended its earlier position and supported NATO forces. A similar shift from amity to enmity occurred in Turkish foreign policy toward the Assad regime in August 2011. While Turkey's public declarations of support for opposition movements in Libya, Egypt, and Syria may be possibly seen as consistent with its liberal democratization vision for MENA, Ankara's approach toward the civil uprising in Bahrain constitutes a contradiction in this regard (Yakış 2014). In the case of Bahrain, the Turkish government remained silent and avoided criticizing the repression of protests by Gulf monarchies (led by Saudi Arabia) in order to not jeopardize its strong economic ties with Gulf countries, in particular with Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE. Another reason behind Turkey's silence was that the uprising in Bahrain was organized by Shi'a groups backed by Iran. Turkey essentially agreed with the Saudi objective of restricting Iranian Shi'a influence in the Persian Gulf region. As noted by Ziya Öniş (2012), a prominent political economist and foreign policy analyst, Turkey's Middle East policy after Arab Spring has been characterized by an intense dilemma between nationalist self-interest and idealist humanitarian concerns. This can be seen as the main reason behind sudden fluctuations in Turkey's reactions to Arab Spring (see Table 10.1).

Table 10.1 Iran and Turkey's policy stances toward Arab Spring

Arab Spring	Iran's stance	Turkey's stance
Tunisia	Victory of Islamism. Free from isolation from international society	Turkish model and trade agreements
Egypt	Problematic relations but several attempts to build a strategic partnership	Problematic relations with the Military government due to Turkish support for Muslim Brotherhood
Libya	Wait-and-see policy	Initially wait-and-see policy, later support for NATO operation against Qaddafi. Deteriorating economic relations due to insecurity
Yemen	Expansion of Shi'a influence toward the Red Sea. Riyadh-Tehran Military conflict	Support for Saudi campaign in Yemen. Economic and Military agreements with pro-Saudi groups
Bahrain	Support for opposition: Military conflict with Gulf monarchies	Strengthening relationship with Gulf monarchies, playing mediator role
Syria	Military and economic support for the Assad regime—a strong ally	Support for anti-Assad opposition. From "zero problem with neighbors" to "zero relations with Assad"

Source: *Author*

Since the catastrophic September 11 attacks in 2001, Iran's two regional enemies—Taliban and Saddam Hussein—have been ousted from power in Afghanistan and Iraq, respectively. Although the George W. Bush administration depicted Iran as a "rogue state" or as part of the so-called "axis of evil" in international arena, Iran has paradoxically benefited from American military operations in the Middle East by filling the vacuum of power left by the destruction of old regimes. Particularly in the politics of predominantly Shi'a Iraq, Iranian influence has steadily grown since the overthrow of the Sunni-led Baath regime. The strategic aims of Tehran have become visible since Arab Spring as Iran has systemically trained and armed Shi'a militias (e.g., Hezbollah, Badr Brigades, and the Houthis) in Bahrain, Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon (Segall 2014).

Since 2011, armed Shi'a movements have flourished across the Middle East, and their rise can be evaluated as part of a grand Iranian power grab (Table 10.1). Alarmed by the Iranian strategy, Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies have armed Sunni opponents of Shi'a militias across the region, triggering ongoing proxy wars in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. Iran's expansionist strategy is aimed to take over sea-lanes (i.e., the Red Sea and the Bal el-Mandeb Strait) covering the Arab world. As such, the Sunni-Shi'a violent competition over four Arab capitals (Beirut, Damascus, Baghdad, and Sana'a) has a crucial geopolitical dimension (Segall 2014). Iran seeks to completely dominate the Persian Gulf by overthrowing the Sunni monarchy in Bahrain and replacing it with Shi'a allies. The softening of Iranian foreign policy toward Washington during the tenure of President Rouhani and the agreement with the USA over Iran's nuclear program are arguably connected to the regional sectarian struggle that emerged after Arab Spring (Kaussler 2014). Iran has sought to improve its image in the eyes of international society and to decrease tensions with the West for the purpose of fully concentrating its efforts to the armed struggle with Saudi Arabia and its Sunni allies.

The Syrian Crisis

Turkish-Syrian relations have generally been troublesome since the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. For many decades, Syrian governments did not officially renounce their territorial claims on the Turkish province of Hatay (former Alexandretta), and the issue often created tensions between two neighbors. The late 1990s was especially a problematic period as Damascus provided logistical and military support to the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) and harbored its leader, Abdullah Öcalan. Syrian support for the PKK ceased only after Turkey directly threatened Damascus with war in 1998. Nevertheless, the following 1998–2011 period was characterized by a détente in Turkish-Syrian relations, and the two governments even established close economic and military cooperation in the late 2000s. In 2004, President Assad signed a binding treaty and officially recognized the Hatay province as Turkish territory (Murinson 2006). The official visit of Assad in 2004 was an historic occasion as he became the first

Syrian political leader to visit Turkey in 57 years. Nevertheless, the Turkish-Syrian partnership quickly collapsed after the beginning of social protests against the Assad regime in March 2011.

Dramatic differences between the post-Arab Spring stances of Turkey and Iran have made Syria a key "battlefield" for the geopolitical rivalry between these two regional powers. Turkish objective in Syria has been the overthrow of the Assad regime by opposition groups, so Ankara has backed the Free Syrian Army since late 2011, while Iran, Russia, Iraq, and Lebanon have supported the Assad regime. Since the beginning of civil war, Turkish and Syrian governments clashed with each other on several occasions as seen during the downing of a Turkish warplane in 2012, frequent cross-border artillery shelling, and occasional armed clashes between Syrian forces and Free Syrian Army. Nevertheless, Turkish and Syrian armed forces have not directly fought each other in a large-scale engagement since the launch of Turkish military intervention into Syria in 24 August 2016—dubbed the "Operation Euphrates Shield." In this context, Russia has played a key intermediary role between Ankara and Damascus as Moscow has so far prevented tensions from turning into a full-scale war.

According to Iran, its four-decade old alliance with the Assad regime is invaluable as it has long enabled Tehran to break its systematic isolation by Western powers within international community. In addition, the anti-Western axis of Tehran and Damascus has also proved successful in containing Israel in the Levant and even threaten Israeli national security via supporting Hezbollah in Lebanon. The fall of Assad cannot be allowed because Iran would lose its only reliable regional ally in the Middle East while also losing much of the political/military influence it has established since the 1980s. The objectives of Iran and Turkey in the Syrian crisis directly clash with each other, and Turkish-Iranian relations have been negatively affected as a result. Yet, the strong economic ties of Turkey and Iran have prevented their disagreement over Syria from threatening the entire relationship.

Another main determinant of Turkish-Iranian relations is the transnational Kurdish question. In the late 2000s, Turkey, Iran, and Syria had established what they termed a "counter-terrorism partnership" against the PKK (and its various affiliates') activities in the region. The deterioration of Turkey's relations with Syrian and Iranian governments since Arab Spring has ended the counter-terrorism partnership and isolated Turkey in its struggle against the PKK. Using the chaos of the Syrian Civil War as an opportunity, the local PKK-affiliate YPG has taken control of large chunks of northern Syria and declared "self-rule" in these territories. The rise of YPG in northern Syria poses a serious risk for Turkey's territorial integrity as the organization smuggles weapons and supplies into Turkish border in order to support the PKK attacks against Turkish security personnel (Van Wilgenburg 2013). If the Syrian crisis could be peacefully resolved through negotiations with Tehran, Moscow, and Damascus, Turkey could possibly rebuild a partnership with its two neighbors against PKK/YPG. However, it has been argued that such a prospect would not be desirable for Iran as stated by Beşir Atalay—the former Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey: "A

regional partnership against PKK means that Iran would lose one of its key non-state-actors [the PKK] which has facilitated Tehran to negate Turkey's regional influence in the Middle East" (Erkuş 2014).

Turkey's Response to Iran-USA Nuclear Negotiations

Turkey's stance toward Iran's nuclear program and possible Iranian ambitions to acquire nuclear weapons has been positive since the AKP came to power in 2002. For instance, the then Prime Minister Erdoğan said in 2013 that "the easing of [economic] sanctions on Iran to curb… Iran's nuclear activities was an important step and positive development, which will create a constructive atmosphere in the region even though there may be those [i.e. Israel] who are not content with it" (Habertürk 2013). Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons during the past two decades has disturbed Israeli, Saudi, and American policy-makers.

The critics of Iran's nuclear program, most notably the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, believe that Tehran is now closer than ever to developing nuclear weapons and that its program is currently in its final critical stage. However, Iranian sources do not confirm these arguments. Prior to being elected, the current Iranian President Hassan Rouhani published a number of works on Iranian nuclear program. His most notable work in this regard, namely, *National Security and Nuclear Security*, does not clearly address the issue of why Iran needs a nuclear program (Rouhani 2012). Rouhani (2012) describes the program simply as a "far-reaching effort to obtain a broad range of nuclear technology from foreign sources." Though his works and enigmatic public statements on the nuclear program have been ambiguous at best, the coming of Rouhani to power has created hope for diplomatic engagements between Iran and Western powers because—unlike his predecessor Mahmoud Ahmadinejad—Rouhani was known as a "dove" on foreign policy issues (Juneau 2014).

Turkish policy-makers have consistently argued that the "cold war" between Iran and Israel damages regional stability and imposes "securitization" and arms races in the Middle East. Thus, Ankara supported the Iran-USA rapprochement during the tenure of President Barack Obama. However, Israel has been extremely critical of diplomatic negotiations between Washington and Tehran. Prime Minister Netanyahu labeled the Iran-USA meetings as "a betrayal of Israel" and compared it to the notorious appeasement policy of the then UK Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain toward Nazi Germany: "[The USA-Iran submit is]… the most dangerous summit for the West since Adolf Hitler met with Neville Chamberlain in 1938 in Munich" (Beinart 2013).

According to Yuval Steinitz, Israel's Minister of International Relations and Strategic Affairs, Rouhani is a "wolf in sheep's clothing, who is planning to win over the West by making minor compromises while buying time to complete the regime's race toward a nuclear weapons capability" (Ahren 2013). To support their accusations, some observers such as Steinitz refer to passages from Rouhani's book (2012) as evidence.

Accordingly, the book clearly reveals the use of "uranium enrichment suspension as a tactic, while Iran went forward on other front." The following passage of Rouhani has evoked much suspicion, for instance, "...while we were negotiating with the West, we were installing equipment in parts of the uranium conversion facility in Isfahan. Indeed, by reducing the tensions, we were able to complete the entire work in Isfahan" (Rouhani 2012).

Diplomatic and Economic Relations Between Turkey and Iran

After Rouhani won over half the votes in Iran's presidential election in 2013, he secured a decisive victory. Then Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu joined the inauguration ceremony and held a meeting with the new president at his office in Tehran on 5 August 2013. It was noted that Davutoğlu's first impression of Iran's new cabinet was extremely positive—particularly in terms of the Syrian crisis (Press TV 2013). Turkey did not immediately expect to see a deviation from the established principles (e.g., Shi'a expansionism) of Iranian foreign policy toward the Middle East, yet anticipated the Rouhani government to be much more reconciliatory toward Ankara (Taştekin 2013).

On several occasions, Davutoğlu voiced his support for USA-Iran talks: "I want to underline that this agreement, which was reached by the 5 + 1 and Iran, is a positive development" (Habertürk 2013). Davutoğlu also noted that sanctions on Iran were damaging to Turkish economy and that easing of sanctions would be beneficial for all sides while easing tensions in the region (Habertürk 2013). Davutoğlu visited Iran in the winter of 2013–2014 and signed a number of cooperation agreements with Tehran on several issues, most notably the Syrian crisis and relations with the military government in Egypt. Turkish and Iranian governments have discussed the Syrian crisis in a series of official meetings throughout the last few years, most recently in the January 2017 "Astana summit" which brought Ankara, Tehran, and Moscow together for the purpose of ensuring ceasefire in Syria. Though the ceasefire the three countries engineer could not be sustainable, negotiations between them continue as of the writing of this study. While the troubles of Syrian crisis have continued since 2011, Turkey and Iran have been careful to not let the Syrian crisis permanently damage the Turkey-Iran partnership in economy. As such, both President Rouhani and President Erdoğan have often made public statements that point to the importance of ties for the two capitals as well as for the whole region.

The US government had imposed economic sanctions on Iran after the 1979 "hostage crisis" and completely banned the import of Iranian goods from 1987 onward. Another sanction came into effect in the 1990s when President Bill Clinton issued an executive order preventing US companies from investing in Iranian oil and gas industries and/or trading with Iran. The US Congress also passed the Iran-Libya

Sanctions Act (ILSA) requiring the US government to impose sanctions on foreign firms investing more than $20 million a year in Iran's energy sector in 1995. However, the US government terminated the applicability of the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act to Libya in 2004.

Due to the reveal of Iran's clandestine nuclear program in 2003, US-Iran relations further deteriorated. The George W. Bush administration believed that Iran attempts to develop the capability to produce both plutonium and highly enriched uranium and that it is actively pursuing the acquisition of fissile material, the expertise and technology required to form the material into nuclear weapons. That was the reason why President Bush claimed on 29 January 2002 that Iran was part of what termed the "axis of evil" and that "Iran was aggressively pursuing weapons of mass destruction" (Elik 2013). Similarly, President Barack Obama claimed in his first State of the Union address on 27 January 2010 that Iran was "violating international agreements in pursuit of nuclear weapons" (Elik 2013). Hence, US governments have imposed a number of economic and political pressures to force Iran to abandon its pursuit of acquiring nuclear weapons.

Together with the US government, the EU and UN have also imposed intensifying sanctions on Iran for forcing the Iranian government to live up to its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, IAEA safeguards agreements, and the UN Security Council resolution. The EU has imposed visa bans on senior state officials such as the leader of Revolutionary Guards Mohammad Ali Jafari, the Defense Minister Mostafa Mohammad Najjar, and former atomic energy chief Gholamreza Aghazadeh and numerous Iranian nuclear and ballistic experts. On 18 June 2013, the British government declared that Iranian assets worth 976 million GBP were frozen. In addition, Britain announced on 12 October 2013 that it was freezing business ties with Bank Mellat and the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines, both of which had previously faced sanctions from the US.

One of the most critical sanctions imposed in 2010 targeted Iran's ability to sell crude oil on the world market, to import refined petroleum products, and to make it more difficult for Iran's Central Bank and other state institutions to engage in financial transactions abroad. It is certain that the sanctions have caused significant damage to Iranian economy, particularly to Iranian oil exports, causing a decline from 2.5 million barrels per day in 2011 to about 1 million barrels per day in 2013 (Elik 2014). As a result, Iran's revenue from oil exports declined 55% from its peak in 2011. The sanctions also affected Turkish-Iranian trade. Most of Iran-Turkey trade relations are focused on energy trade, especially crude oil and natural gas. Turkey bought 200,000 barrels of oil per day from Iran in 2011; however, Turkey was forced to reduce its oil import from Iran by 10–20% from 2011 onward (Elik 2014). Turkey's state-owned bank, *Halkbank*, has been settling much of Turkey's payments to Iran for oil and natural gas with gold shipments. That form of payment by Turkey has been made sanctionable under Executive Order 13622 as of 1 July 2013 and under P.L. 112–239. However, no US sanctions have yet been imposed on any Turkish firms under Executive Order 135622.

Despite being part of the same pro-US regional military alliance (i.e., CENTO), economic and political relations between Turkey and Iran were not all friendly

during the tenure of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. However, the 1979 Islamic Revolution has opened a new chapter in Turkish-Iranian relations, particularly following Iran's admittance to the Joint Economic Commission Protocol with Turkey. Since the first meeting in 1983, 21 Turkish-Iranian Joint Economic Commission [JEC] protocols have been signed (Tehran Times 2010). In addition, Turkey and Iran—together with Pakistan—are founding members of Tehran-based Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), which was established in 1985. The organization now has ten members, covering a total population of approximately 300 million. Since the mid-1980s, Turkey and Iran have signed a series of economic agreements, but most of them could not have been implemented due to international economic sanctions against Iran.

The main turning point for Turkish-Iranian trade was the construction of the Tabriz-Erzurum natural gas pipeline (which became operational in 2001), the pipeline gradually deepening the economic interdependency between two countries since early 2000s. From 2001 onward, bilateral trade has boomed albeit the total trade balance between the two has always stood in favor of Iran due to its massive oil and gas exports.[1] In 2001, the value of Turkey's exports to Iran was $235,784,000, while Iran's exports to Turkey were valued at $815,730,000. Hence, total trade stood at $1,051,514,000 that year (Elik 2014). The trade volume between two neighbors reached $10,229 billion in 2008 and $21.3 billion in 2012, which made Turkey one of the most significant trading partners of Iran. According to the Turkish Ministry of Economy, Iran was Turkey's third largest export market in 2012 with an export volume of around $10 billion (Elik 2014). The same year, Iran was Turkey's sixth largest supplier of imported goods with a value of $11.4 billion. After Arab Spring, the trade volume between Turkey and Iran has decreased from its peak ($21.3 billion) in 2012 to less than $10 billion by the end of 2015 (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2017). However, this decline in trade relations is due to intense US pressure on Turkey to adhere to the international sanctions rather than being the result of the Syrian crisis or other regional disagreements.

Concluding Remarks

The Arab Spring has introduced new opportunities for increasing the cooperation between Turkey and Iran across the Middle East, but the regional middle powers have so far failed to work together in solving major political crises in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. Turkey has continuously pursued a moralist/idealist foreign policy position toward the Arab world, particularly in the ongoing Syrian Civil War. However, Iran has followed realist security-oriented policies in order to not lose its strong military

[1]For more information on the evolution of foreign trade between Turkey and Iran since the 1979 Revolution, see Elik (2014).

alliance with the Assad regime in Damascus. In order to spread its influence across the region, Tehran has also supported Hezbollah in Lebanon and Syria as well the Houthis in Yemen. The Middle East policies of Ahmadinejad and Rouhani administrations have been consistent as both focused on benefiting from the chaotic post-2011 situation as much as possible. During his election campaign, Rouhani had promised to open Iranian market to international community, leaving behind Ahmadinejad's confrontational foreign policy toward the Western world (Milani 2013). In this regard, Rouhani's foreign policy has diverged from the Ahmadinejad era as several rounds of negotiations with the USA on Iran's nuclear program have achieved considerable success in easing international sanctions—albeit it is not yet clear if the newly elected Trump administration would adopt a new stance on this issue (Jpost 2013).

The international community seems to have divided into two groups on the issue of Iran-US nuclear negotiations. While Israel is the vanguard of those who oppose the deal, Turkey has supported the deal and the end of the long "cold war" between Iran and the US. Turkish policy-makers such as President Erdoğan believe that Iranian leaders are rational actors seeking to advance Iran's national interests and protect its territorial integrity. As such, Iran has not yet decided to actually construct a nuclear weapon and probably prefers to remain in a "condition of nuclear latency" that could be used to build a nuclear arsenal should Tehran sees the need for it in the future. Moreover, Turkey does not seem to feel threatened by the prospect of Iranian nuclear weapons as that would not miraculously transform the long isolated Iran into a major world power overnight and that it would certainly not enable Tehran to blackmail Israel (which already possesses nuclear weapons) or its other neighbors such as Turkey (Walt 2013).

To sum-up, this study has argued that though Turkey and Iran have adopted radically different understandings of Arab Spring and their stances have clashed in issues such as the Syrian Civil War and the Bahrain uprising, the post-2011 turbulence has not actually resulted in a dramatic crisis in Turkish-Iranian relations. Economic interdependency between the two countries can be seen as the main factor that has kept occasional tensions between the two major regional powers from escalation. In the foreseeable future, Turkey-Iran relations can be reasonably expected to remain stable—regardless of the uncertain trajectories of post-Arab Spring armed conflicts in the Middle East.

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Chapter 8
Assessing the Regional Influence and Relations of Turkey and Saudi Arabia After the Arab Spring

Konstantinos Zarras

Over the past two decades, several narratives about the creation of a new Middle Eastern regional order have appeared in academic and journalistic circles. This was the case, for example, after the conclusion of the Oslo Accords in 1993 or at the time of the announcement of the Broader Middle East Initiative by the US administration in 2004 that created false expectations of overcoming the perennial political conflicts in the area. Since the early days of the 2011 Tunisian revolution, the idea of a "New Middle East" has resurfaced, but the initial state of euphoria has once again been replaced by skepticism and despair. Depending on the narrator's perspective, the term "New Middle East" takes different meanings. In some cases, it has been used as a tool for promoting hegemonic aspirations of reshaping the political landscape according to state interests.[1] Or it has been embedded into a neoliberal vision of spreading Western norms and values within the region. In this analysis, the term "New Middle East" is employed to simply indicate the ongoing emergence of a new strategic-political reality due to a significant redistribution of power among regional actors since 2011.

The main aim of this chapter is to assess the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia who have gradually assumed important roles in the emerging strategic environment. The first part examines the ongoing transformation process in the Middle East after the eruption of a series of revolts in December 2010. In order to grasp the major security dynamics, a regional approach of international politics is utilized. What follows then is an analysis of the respective foreign policies of Turkey and Saudi Arabia over four regional issues: the Syrian Civil War, the

[1]The term was introduced in 2006 in Tel Aviv by the then US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice who wished to replace another term, namely, the "Broader Middle East." For more details, see Ottaway and Carothers (2004).

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Iraqi conflict, the containment of Iran, and finally the intra-Sunni competition. These are considered as main fields of interaction that create incentives for both cooperation and antagonism between the two regional powers who are seeking to extend their influence throughout the region.

Turkey and Saudi Arabia: Regional Powers in a Changing Middle East

Identifying Turkey and Saudi Arabia as "regional powers" presupposes the designation of a region which constitutes of their distinctive theater of operations. In this regard, the theoretical conception of a "Middle Eastern states system" creates an appropriate framework for understanding the interactions between the two states as well as their outcomes (Buzan and Waever 2003). It is clear that through this lens, the notion of territoriality remains a fundamental principle in international relations as geography and distance still matter. A regional system approach offers methodological flexibility and allows us to distinguish between different levels of analysis (global, interregional, regional, state, substate) and to examine their interconnection. In accordance with this perspective, a collectivity of autonomous actors must fulfill certain basic requirements to qualify as a regional states system; there should be at least two sovereign actors in territorial contiguity, with an increased interaction capacity that creates the possibility of getting involved in a war.

Given the approach outlined above, Turkey and Saudi Arabia operate in a Middle Eastern subsystem which also includes the states of the Gulf and the Levant (Iran, Iraq, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Yemen, UAE, Lebanon, Syria, Israel, and Jordan) and Egypt as well as substate or quasi-state entities.[2] It should be highlighted, however, that the boundaries of regional states systems are not permanently defined and their designation depends on many factors such as the analytical purposes of a study.[3] Between the members of a subsystem, there are significant differences with regard to their capabilities (hierarchy of power) and their respective roles. In the contemporary Middle East, there are five regional poles of power. Furthermore, Turkey and Egypt can be identified as pivotal states, meaning that they have the capacity to operate in more than one region and also perform a special function in interregional security interactions. Egypt's security is heavily influenced

[2]Among the most important non-state entities are the Palestinian Authority in the occupied West Bank, Hamas in Gaza, the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq, Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthi movement in Yemen, and the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

[3]In this regard, some scholars include the region of North Africa as well as Afghanistan into a wider Middle Eastern subsystem. The arguments in favor of this methodological choice have been reinforced after recent regional developments, when the 2010–2011 revolutionary waves from Tunisia moved eastward and affected almost every state of the wider Middle East. Nevertheless, in this study, it is argued that separating North Africa from the Middle East remains the more appropriate and helpful choice for the analysis.

by developments in the Maghreb and the Horn of Africa regions, while Turkey plays an active role also in Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. The state of Afghanistan is not considered to be a member of the Middle East but is regarded as an insulator, which separates the region from the South Asian and Central Asia subsystems. In contrast to Turkey and Egypt, Afghanistan is not exercising influence but rather constituting a field where external powers compete for power.

Emerged from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire and the colonial management of Western powers, the Middle Eastern system of states is characterized by a high level of instability and political violence. During the era of the Arab Uprisings, it can be depicted as a multipolar conflict formation with an important but declining external global power penetration. Saudi Arabia and Turkey together with Israel, Iran, and Egypt constitute, at this point, the leading regional actors who vie for power and influence across the area. At the same time, the US involvement in regional security, which was strengthened in the post-9/11 era but declined during the President Barack Obama administration, should still be considered a determinant factor. As turmoil mounted in the MENA region, a broader discussion over the future of the regional state system has resurfaced. Major developments have altered the state of play to such an extent that a number of observers (e.g., Sayigh 2014a; Rabinovich 2014; Simon 2014) predicted that we might be going through a radical redrawing of Middle Eastern borders. The end of Sykes-Picot order was also announced in a dramatic tone by the jihadist-Salafist organization of ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) after a series of successful military advancements across Syria and Iraq (Sayigh 2014b). Regardless of whether this is an exaggerated argument, the Middle East has undoubtedly entered into a new phase after 2011.

The ongoing and open-ended procedure of the 2011 Arab Uprisings has already caused alterations in the Middle Eastern strategies and political morphology (Dalacoura 2013, p. 76). We have witnessed the collapse of long-standing regimes in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Yemen; the outbreak of a full-scale civil war in Syria; heightened internal violence in fragmented Iraq; and a subsequent regional refugee crisis and significant turbulence across the region. These developments have transformed the complex web of alliances which defines the struggle for power and influence in the region. Nevertheless, it needs to be said that it is still too early to assess the potential trajectories and long-term implications of the phenomenon. The example of an ever-fluctuating Egyptian political transition since 2011, for instance, indicates that time distance is necessary to accurately evaluate and interpret the changes that occur throughout the region.

The major security dynamics after the eruption of the Arab Spring can be identified by the description of three interrelated confrontations. The first corresponds to the rivalry between the so-called Axis of Resistance—constituted by the Islamic Republic of Iran, Syria, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Hamas in Gaza—and Israel with its Western allies such as the USA. The second confrontation refers to the intra-Muslim rivalry, sometimes called the "New Middle East Cold War" (Gause 2014), that opposes the regional powers of Iran and Saudi Arabia and has a strong sectarian aspect taking the form of Sunni versus Shi'a. Finally, there is a growing rift within the Sunni camp between Saudi Arabia and Qatar, who share

opposing views on a number of regional issues. In the context of the Arab Spring, the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War, the resurgence of violence in Iraq, and the political earthquake in Egypt have been the most important developments. In the meantime, there was also the drawback of the US involvement in the region, meaning that regional security dynamics became more prominent, and the reigniting of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict after the Israeli armed forces' "Protective Edge" operation against Hamas in Gaza.

Turkey and Saudi Arabia are playing a substantial role as regional powers in recent developments. In certain issues, they cooperate closely, while in other cases, they share different views and compete with each other. Their cooperation in the economic sector is reinforced by the complementary character of their economic structures. In recent years, the bilateral trade volume has more than doubled, and the expectations for a greater development of their economic relations in other sectors are high. In the diplomatic arena, their relationship was institutionalized with the establishment of the "High-Level Strategic Dialogue"—a series of intergovernmental meetings initiated in 2008. Moreover, Ankara served as a kind of conduit between Riyadh and NATO, by hosting the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) in 2004.

During the course of the social unrest in the Arab world, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia managed to remain relatively stable, relying on its enormous energy resources income which was used to finance housing and employment programs, while at the same time, the Saudi security forces quickly suppressed any domestic protest movement. The Kingdom's policies are determined by the principles of preserving internal stability, maintaining a regional balance of power in order to contain Iran's rise toward becoming a regional hegemon, and relying on the US military and intelligence presence in the region for national security. Nevertheless, regional developments and the departure of the US troops from Iraq inevitably favored Iran and spread fear to Riyadh who is now searching for new allies and additional sources of military power to achieve its aims.[4] The Saudi administration conducted counterrevolutionary policies with regard to the unrest in Egypt and Bahrain, where the GCC's (Gulf Cooperation Council) "Protective Shield" forces successfully confronted the upheavals in Manama. Furthermore, it sought to underpin the monarchies of Jordan and Morocco with financial support and by strengthening their ties with the GCC. In relation to the Syrian and Libyan issues, however, the Kingdom backed opposition groups and favored regime changes. With regard to the Yemeni crisis, after an initial attempt to mediate for a peaceful transition of power, Saudi Arabia reacted to the eruption of the war and the advancement of the Houthi rebels by launching a military operation in order to influence the outcome of the ongoing conflict.

On the Turkish side, it needs to be underlined that the state had undergone a major internal transformation after the rise to power of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, hereafter AKP) which signaled a new phase of economic development and political activity. Turkey's return to Middle East politics has caused the adding of a new regional power with considerable influence at any political calculation. The AKP leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his

[4]Gregory Gause III (2011, p. 16) has described this situation as "the Saudi Losing Streak."

administration were able to put Turkey to the forefront and displayed great achievements, making Turkey a model for Middle Eastern states. But the success story started to decline in 2011; Turkey's ambitious multidimensional diplomacy was being shaken by unanticipated course of events in Syria, Egypt, and Iraq, and Turkey's once acclaimed "zero problems with neighbors' policy" has come to an end (Kouskouvelis 2013; Litsas 2014).

Cooperation or Antagonism in the Syrian Arena?

One of the most significant developments in the Middle Eastern state system during the period of the Arab Spring has been the Syrian crisis, which started as a popular uprising against the regime in power and then evolved into a series of overlapping conflicts. Turkey and Saudi Arabia who are considered—together with Qatar—as the main regional backers of the Syrian Opposition have become increasingly entangled in this intricate war. Contrary to their expectations for a quick overthrow of Bashar al-Assad, the Damascus government displayed remarkable resilience against deeply fragmented rebel forces. The two regional powers have thrown their support to the opposition in order to gain leverage in a future political constellation. Nevertheless, this proved to be an extremely difficult enterprise in the multilayered, "highly localized" (Sayigh 2014c), and rapidly changing strategic landscape of the Syrian Civil War. Interfactional rivalries, the rise of sectarianism, and the growing prominence of radical jihadist groups have created a chaotic situation on the ground.

Interstate strategic interactions between Ankara and Damascus had been dense, even before the rise to power of the AKP which signaled the Turkish reengagement with the Middle East. Turkey's main security concern has been associated with the Syrian regime's support for Ankara's principal enemy, the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK). Furthermore, disputes arose over the water resources management of the Euphrates and Orontes rivers as well as over the historical issue of the Hatay province annexation by Turkey in 1939. In 1998, the two states that share the longest common borders came at the brink of war when a Turkish military buildup was followed by the compliance of the Hafez al-Assad government with Ankara's demands and led to the expulsion of the PKK leader, Abdullah Öcalan, from Syria. From that point onward, their relationship improved significantly and culminated during the Erdoğan administration to a series of signed agreements on mutual cooperation.

Until the eruption of the crisis in Daraa in March 2011, Syria had been the cornerstone of the AKP's zero problems with neighbors' policy. As the series of peaceful protests and demonstrations morphed into a devastating civil war, the Syrian-Turkish rapprochement came to an end. After an attempt for mediation in order to achieve a peaceful solution to the crisis, then Prime Minister Erdoğan called for Assad's resignation and thrown his full support behind the Syrian Opposition in August 2011, marking a fundamental shift in Turkish foreign policy.

Turkey served as a host country for the Syrian Opposition and has been involved in the formation of the Syrian National Council (SNC), a coalition force which attempted to control the armed insurrection against the regime and create the conditions for the establishment of a new government. Ankara was counting on international and regional support that would reinforce the Free Syrian Army and ultimately lead to the collapse of the Assad regime. As the government troops proved to be flexible and resilient in the conflict and opposition forces became more fragmented and dispersed, however, it became evident that the organization in-exile had a limited influence on developments on the ground. The dysfunctional SNC was replaced by the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (also known as simply the "National Coalition"), and the center of gravity of the exiled political opposition moved from Ankara to Doha. Moreover, the annulation of an anticipated military intervention by Western powers in August 2013 and the agreement brokered by the US and Russia in September 2013 over the Syrian chemical arsenal deepened Ankara's predicament.

With regard to Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom's administration openly supported the rebel forces from the beginning of the crisis but was reluctant to become seriously involved in the conflict. Throughout the last decades, the Saudi-Syrian relations have passed through different phases and were influenced by a number of regional issues including the Lebanese domestic crisis.[5] After the outbreak of the upheaval, Riyadh could not stay indifferent in face of the brutal crackdown of the uprising and the atrocities committed by regime forces against Sunni civilians. But above all, Saudi Arabia viewed the situation in Syria through the prism of its antagonism with Iran. Damascus had been the key Arab ally of Saudi Arabia's main enemy, and the crisis represented an opportunity for a regime change, one that would bring a Sunni-dominated—thus more favorable to Riyadh—government in power. From this perspective, Saudi involvement aimed at weakening the so-called Axis of Resistance and consequently Iran's ability to exercise influence in the area. Tehran's active involvement in the conflict, through material and technical support for government forces, the presence of Iranian military personnel, and at most the principal role of Hezbollah in the battleground have alarmed the Saudis.

The Kingdom's involvement in Syrian affairs intensified after the summer of 2013 when King Abdullah assumed a leading role over opposition politics, previously held by Qatar. But controlling its various institutions and exercising influence through them over Syria proved to be a very difficult task. Internal divisions, the complicated civil-military relations—low level of coordination and cooperation between the National Council and the Supreme Military Command (SMC) of the Free Syrian Army—and most of all their limited influence on the factions of the armed rebellion have caused the failure of any attempt to unify and strengthen the opposition forces. The anticipated breakdown of the Geneva II talks in February 2014 has further deteriorated the relations between rebel groups

[5] A serious deterioration was caused after Riyadh blamed the Syrian regime for the assassination of Riyadh's ally in Lebanon, Rafik Hariri.

and the exiled political elite. Meanwhile, frictions between Riyadh and Doha came to the forefront as the two neighboring Gulf States share opposing viewpoints regarding the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan) organization and its branches in Syria.

In the competition for influence over the opposition, the Turkish stance vis-à-vis the Muslim Brotherhood-associated factions seem to constitute a point of divergence with Saudi Arabia (Lacroix 2014). The AKP maintains ties with the Brotherhood at the regional level, and their relationship is based on common values linked with a so-called “moderate political Islam” approach. After the rise of the Ennahda Party in power in Tunisia and the temporary success of the Freedom and Justice Party of Mohamed Morsi in Egypt, “the Turkish model” gained prominence in the “New Middle East” discourse. As a consequence, Turkish soft power and influence could spread throughout the region. This prospect created the conditions for the shift of the Turkish policy vis-à-vis the Assad regime. For Riyadh, however, the anti-monarchist republican ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood organization is regarded as a threat for the Kingdom’s stability. The Saudi decision to support the military coup of General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in Egypt and designation of the Brotherhood as a terrorist organization came as a blow, and it seems that this issue continues to be an obstacle in the Saudi-Turkish cooperation at the regional level.

On the other hand, Saudi Arabia and Turkey have a common general interest in the pacification and stabilization of the area, because the ongoing violence could have serious spillover effects in their countries. Especially for Turkish security, the continuation of the war has already had detrimental effects, marked by the May 2012 car bomb attacks in the border town of Hatay, Reyhanlı. The situation is becoming more complicated and menacing due to the straddling of the Syrian-Turkish borders by Syrian and foreign fighters and the presence of approximately 3 million Syrian refugees in Turkish soil. Moreover, the Turkish attention is focused on the Kurdish-dominated areas in northeastern Syria, where Kurdish forces associated with the Democratic Union Party (PYD) are fighting for their survival and have aspirations for the establishment of an independent Kurdish enclave. Despite the amelioration of its relations with the Kurdish entity (i.e., KRG) in northern Iraq, Ankara is not looking favorably upon the separatist tendencies of the Kurdish population in Syria, due to the links of the PYD with the PKK.

Saudi Arabia and Turkey have come on the same side with regard to their dealing of jihadist factions that became protagonists in the Syrian arena. Even though the two states had ambiguous policies and turned a blind eye to the activities of radical Islamist groups during the first phase of the war, they became alarmed by the spectacular rise of the ISIS. Incidents, such as the kidnapping of Turkish citizens in Iraq, have forced the Turkish government to adopt a more aggressive stance against the ISIS. Saudi Arabia, which backed conservative Salafist groups of the Syrian Opposition, is also deeply concerned by the ISIS’ rise and the increasing Saudi membership in it, since it has experienced in the past the consequences of supporting jihadist groups outside the country. The return of jihadists from Afghanistan was followed by a wave of terrorist attacks destined at overthrowing the Saudi monarchy.

The Syrian conflict is often depicted as a proxy war with a sectarian aspect where the confrontation has taken the form of Sunni versus Shi'a. In fact, this depiction covers only part of the highly localized, externally penetrated, and extremely complicated war which includes a number of interconnected conflicts. Despite the fact that both Ankara and Riyadh seek to overthrow Assad and to establish a new Damascus regime that would bring Syria closer to the Sunni states camp, their policies are not identical in relation to the role of the Muslim Brotherhood in a future Syria or the issue of Iran's containment. As regional powers, it's their mutual interest to limit the rising power of Tehran, which became more influential after the developments that followed the US invasion in Iraq.[6] The two states can form a powerful bloc in order to deter Iran from conducting policies against their vital interests. Nevertheless, Turkey is more flexible and seeks also to cooperate with Iran in Syria and other fields, while Saudi Arabia regards Iran as a "mortal threat" for its security and political survival.

The Regional Struggle Over the Future of Iraq

The fall of Mosul to jihadist groups in June 2014, caused by the rapid advancements of Sunni militants spearheaded by the ISIS, has brought the Iraqi security situation once again to the forefront of international attention. In the context of the debate over the "end of Sykes-Picot order," the most likely prospect for a reconfiguration of Middle Eastern borders can be found in this state, especially with regard to the establishment of an independent, internationally recognized Kurdish state in the northern part of the country. Several factors have contributed to the resurgence of violence in Iraq, including the sectarian policies of the Nouri al-Maliki administration that alienated the Sunni minority, the spillover effects after the escalation of the Syrian conflict, and the withdrawal of US forces from the country in December 2011. Iraq constitutes an area where both Turkey and Saudi Arabia have significant security interests, and recent developments have increased incentives for cooperation but also for competition.

In order to understand the Iraqi path toward political fragmentation, we have to trace back the strategic turnover in regional security that occurred with the US penetration in the Middle Eastern state system after the end of the bipolar phase of international politics at the end of Cold War. Previously an integral part of the Gulf triangular balance of power that included Iran and Saudi Arabia, Iraq gradually devolved from a regional power into a weak state after two military interventions by the USA (i.e., the Gulf Wars). Internal violence reached a peak during the period 2006–2007, when Sunni forces confronted Shi'a factions and the US military. But

[6] It should be mentioned here that one of the most significant evolutions during the Syrian crisis has been the withdrawal of Hamas from Syria and the possible consequent loss of the Palestinian constituent of the Iran-led axis.

after the so-called Tribal Awakening, the levels of violence decreased as well as the activity of radical jihadist groups such as Al-Qaeda in Iraq. The Sunni Sahwa militias—supported by the US army—have expelled jihadist fighters from several provinces and significantly reduced their capabilities. Nevertheless, the situation changed after the US withdrawal and the widespread resentment of the Sunni minority, triggered by the policies of al-Maliki that were characterized as sectarian and pro-Shi'a. The federal government forces responded violently to a series of Sunni demonstrations and protests that started in 2012 and created favorable conditions for the reemergence of radical groups. At the same time, the chaotic situation in Syria offered the opportunity for the ISIS to regroup, regain capabilities, and exercise influence over a vast territory, straddling the Iraqi-Syrian border.

In post-invasion Iraq, a fragile political structure emerged and is constituted by a federal government elected in 2010 and controlled by Shi'a factions, the autonomous entity of the Kurdish Regional Government in the northeastern part of the country and the marginalized Sunni Arab minority who often boycotts the whole political system and displays tolerance to jihadists groups who operate across Sunni-dominated areas. A possible disintegration of the state is regarded as a great challenge for regional and global actors who are in play in Iraq. Turkey and Saudi Arabia hold an important position in terms of affecting security developments. Ankara is actually one of the main players in the "Kurdish game" which has occupied the first place in the Turkish security agenda for decades. On the other side, Riyadh is more interested in the growing Iranian influence over the Shi'a-dominated Iraqi state. Furthermore, the two states seem to share a common position regarding the rise of the ISIS power in the Sunni provinces of the country throughout the summer of 2014.

A decade ago, few observers could have predicted that Turkey would become one of the main supporters of Kurdish statehood aspirations in northern Iraq. This notable foreign policy shift by the AKP administration reveals the flexible character of its diplomacy. Despite fears that an independent state in northern Iraq could set a precedent for Turkey's own Kurdish minority, Ankara decided to anticipate evolutions on the ground by siding with the KRG and the ruling Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) of Massoud Barzani (Al 2014). As the maintenance of Iraq's unity and territorial integrity becomes more difficult, the general aim of the Turkish administration is to gain leverage over the KRG and create a sphere of influence in an area where vital security interests, such as the control of PKK's activities, are at stake. Furthermore, the established ties have led to a mutually beneficial economic relationship, with a considerable growth of cross-border trade; Turkey is the largest foreign investor in northern Iraq, while the KRG has become its second largest trading partner (Park 2012). These relations, however, have caused frictions with the al-Maliki and US administrations. This was the case after Ankara's decision to sign separate arrangements with Erbil on the oil sector which contain exports via the Baghdad-owned Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline in defiance of the Iraqi central government and Washington.

Turkey shared with Saudi Arabia a common distrust of the Nouri al-Maliki administration. During the 2010 electoral campaign, Riyadh and Ankara backed

Sunni factions as well as al-Maliki's rival, Ayad Allawi, in an attempt to counter-balance Iranian influence over Baghdad (Harling 2014). Despite his victory, Allawi failed to form a government; the State of Law Coalition assumed power and provoked the reaction of Saudi Arabia, who considered al-Maliki as Iran's primary choice for the prime minister position. The sectarian policy of the new government, particularly after the departure of the US forces from Iraq, has sparked unrest among Sunnis and created the conditions for the revival of the sectarian conflict and the resurgence of jihadists groups in the country (Harling 2014). Saudi Arabia made it clear that it would not cooperate with an Iraqi administration who conducts sectarian policies of discrimination against Iraqi Sunnis. For his part, al-Maliki accused Riyadh of supporting radical Islamist groups such as the ISIS who were attacking the Iraqi security forces.

Beyond these accusations, it can be noted that the ISIS success in Iraq was not welcomed by any regional actor involved in Iraqi politics, including Saudi Arabia who has formally banned the group (Khatib 2014). The advancing ISIS forces threatened not only Baghdad but Erbil as well, and this development prompted Turkey as well as the United States to step up their efforts against the radical group. To deal with this severe security situation, the global and regional players agreed that the ousting of al-Maliki seemed like the best choice in order to appease Sunni displeasure and confront the jihadists. A consensus has been reached between Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar, and even Iran, and al-Maliki was replaced by Haider al-Abadi, in an effort to maintain Iraq's threatened territorial unity. Therefore, Ankara and Riyadh have found common ground in supporting a new administration in the central Baghdad government and dealing with the ISIS.

Containing Iran: The Approaches of Saudi Arabia and Turkey

Saudi-Turkish relations can be affected in a positive or negative way by the evolution of the rivalry between Riyadh and Tehran. As previously described, the battlegrounds of Syria and Iraq have become, among others, the arena of a "proxy war" where the Islamic Republic and the Kingdom vie for influence. The two Gulf regional powers' competition is also visible in Yemen, Lebanon and the Palestinian territories and to a lesser extent in Bahrain and Kuwait. Ankara's positioning in a number of issues that influence Saudi-Iranian affairs—the future of Syria and Iraq, the question of the Iranian nuclear program, relations with the West, and the opposing political visions over the evolving regional order—will condition the level of cooperation or competition with Riyadh. As a regional power, Turkey plays an important role given that it possesses various diplomatic and strategic means to change the balance of power.

The importance of the Saudi perception of Iranian threat in the policy-making procedure should not be underestimated (Gresh 2014a). Iran's containment is

considered as a top priority by the Saudi administration, while the Turkish diplomatic apparatus is more flexible vis-à-vis Tehran. The long-standing geopolitical rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia, which included border disputes over Gulf Islands, was further enhanced after the Islamic Revolution of 1979 which brought Ayatollah Khomeini to power. The revolutionary and anti-monarchist character of the new regime and its aim to export the Islamic revolution abroad has caused the rise of tensions between the two powers. The gradual empowerment of Shi'a factions in post-2003 Iraq, especially after the withdrawal of the US forces in 2011, has inevitably enhanced Iran's position in the region. Henceforth, the so-called Iraq Effect has turned Saudi policy to checking Iranian influence across the region. The weakening of the Iran-led axis has also been the underlying logic of the decision of Saudi Arabia in June 2013 to step up its operations in Syria and contribute to the rise to power of a Sunni-dominated regime, as well as its decision to lead a coalition against the Houthis of Yemen in 2015.

Regarding the relationship of Ankara with Tehran, it was historically characterized by mutual suspicion, due to the Turkish alliance with Western powers as well as differences over their political and ideological orientation and passed through different phases with the Kurdish issue to be the principal determinant. In the Iraqi Front, Tehran is not favorable on the creation of an independent Kurdistan because it is worried that it will revive the separatist tensions of its own Kurdish population. Moreover, an independent Kurdistan under Barzani's KDP could weaken Tehran's Iraqi allies, namely, the central government in Baghdad as well as the Talabani-led Patriotic Union of Kurdistan party (PUK). There is also a growing fear that a Kurdish state would be influenced by Israel, given that Tel Aviv has for a long time openly supported the Kurdish road to independence. For the above reasons, a divergence over the future of northern Iraq might occur between Turkey and Iran which implies that Ankara could instead find common ground with Riyadh.

The question of the Iranian nuclear program creates prospects for further cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Turkey. This issue was prominent before the eruption of the Arab Spring. Neither state looks favorably into a nuclear-armed Iran, because it could prompt these actors to sliding into a regional nuclear arms race. For its part, Turkey would prefer to avoid the emergence of a nuclear power in its neighborhood. But Ankara did not follow the hard-line stance against Tehran that was adopted by Riyadh, Tel Aviv, and the West (Bonab 2009). Instead, it attempted to play the role of the mediator in the crisis and was involved into negotiations and initiatives that were not received positively by Riyadh. A Turkish mediating role, however, might lead to the prevention of Iran becoming a "nuclear state," and the three regional powers can form a bloc to promote a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East against the interests of the sole nuclear power of the region, Israel. Moreover, the two Sunni states can take initiatives in the Palestinian arena, in order to reinforce their soft power in the Muslim world. Iran champions the Palestinian issue by supporting Hamas and being the most serious enemy of the Israeli state. The 2006 Lebanon War, where Hezbollah fought against the Israeli armed forces, had a profound impact on public opinion, and Tehran appeared as the only force that could oppose Israel's expansionist regional strategy. Saudi Arabia

and Turkey have a common interest in countering the Iranian involvement and appearing as the protectors of Palestinian rights.

The Emergent Rift Within the Sunni Regional Camp and Ankara-Riyadh Relations

Turkey and Saudi Arabia interact in a setting of shifting alliances and wars within the Middle Eastern state system. As previously described, the three main interconnected power struggles include the Iran-led "axis of resistance" against Israel and the Western penetration, the Sunni-Shi'a divide where Saudi Arabia has a leading role in opposing Iranian hegemonic aspirations, and the intra-Sunni rift between the pro-status quo states (i.e., Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Jordan) against Qatar and Turkey who are backing groups and leaders affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood. Among the three regional confrontations that define the strategic landscape since the beginning of the Arab Spring, it is the intra-Sunni division that has caused the rise of tension in Turkish-Saudi relations (Gresh 2014b).

The intra-Gulf divide between Riyadh and Doha is apparent in Egypt, Syria, Yemen, and Palestine and has severe repercussions for Ankara's regional policies. Qatar's ambition to carve out an independent foreign policy is opposed by its powerful GCC partner, the Saudi Kingdom. The rift has deepened after the regime changes that followed the wave of 2011 Arab revolts. Saudi Arabia was concerned at the fall of Hosni Mubarak and became suspicious of Qatar's leading role in supporting regional changes and backing the Muslim Brotherhood. Within this context, Saudi Arabia looked favorably to the overthrow of the elected Mohamed Morsi government by the Egyptian armed forces and has thrown massive support to the newly established regime of General al-Sisi. The coverage of the crisis in Egypt by the Qatari-based *Al-Jazeera* media network was also a source of tension between the two states. The divergence over the Muslim Brotherhood led to an impasse in January 2014, when the Saudi monarchy designated the organization and its affiliates as a "terrorist organization."

In September 2012, the then Prime Minister Erdoğan welcomed Mohamed Morsi and Khaled Meshal as guests of honor to the AKP general congress. AKP's ideological affinity with the Muslim Brotherhood movement has been a determining factor for the regional policies of Ankara. During the period of the Morsi interregnum, Turkey seemed best positioned to project its influence in the Middle East and North Africa in comparison with other regional powers. But, Ankara's alignment with the Qatari policy on the Muslim Brotherhood agenda was received with dissatisfaction in Riyadh. In the course of events, Turkish policy has taken a blow after the regime change in Cairo and the diplomatic maneuvers of Saudi Arabia that aimed at isolating Qatar and causing a rollback of the Muslim Brotherhood. Turkish-Egyptian relations are at a low, with Cairo accusing Ankara for meddling in its internal affairs. In this context, the Turkish government

alienated not only Cairo but also Damascus and Tel Aviv, while its relations with Baghdad and Abu Dhabi have also been strained.

The evolution of the intra-Sunni antagonism could take a different course, however, after the takeover of the Syrian issue by Saudi Arabia and the replacement of Prince Bandar bin Sultan from the post of intelligence chief as well as after the rise of Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani as the new Emir of Qatar. Doha could seek a consensus with the Saudi Kingdom on regional issues and abandon its independent policy orientation. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia has an interest to mend fences with Qatar since its fears over the Iranian rising influence exacerbated after the secret negotiations of Washington with Tehran, through the mediation by Oman, and the announcement of the interim nuclear agreement. Amidst these developments, Turkey's strategic position in the region has deteriorated markedly. It is in Ankara's interest to maintain good relations with Saudi Arabia and cooperate in the fronts of Syria and Iraq as well as on the prevention of Iran's rise to a regional hegemon.

Conclusion

Turkey and Saudi Arabia operate in a complicated regional setting where an arc of instability has emerged from Egypt to Iraq. The root cause of this region-wide crisis is the failure of state authorities to be able to control their borders and their territories. State weakness is a principal feature of the Middle Eastern regional system, and the vacuums of power in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen are being exploited by radical substate groups and factions as it is manifested by the case of the rapid rise of the ISIS. In this chapter, the aim was to assess the regional influence and relations between Ankara and Riyadh in the context of the emergence "New Middle East" with a special focus on four principal fields of interaction: the Syrian Civil War, the security situation in Iraq, the containment of Iran, and finally the intra-Sunni divergences over a number of regional issues. As the Middle Eastern international relations sometimes often take the form of a Hobbesian "war of all against all," it becomes more difficult to determine the security situation and to estimate its possible outcomes. The open-ended transformative process of the Arab Spring and the roles of both Turkey and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the region will be substantially affected by future developments in the Syrian conflict, the issue of Iraq's path to territorial disintegration, and the political stability of the Egyptian regime.

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Chapter 9
Turkey, Cyprus, and the Arab Uprisings

Nikos Christofis

The end of the Cold War and the tragic events of 9/11 in 2001 brought about a radical shift in international political landscape and led to a remaking of the world order. In the field of foreign policy-making, it is these "major changes in the geopolitical context generally [that] bring the reformulation of geopolitical visions, a re-articulation of geographical representations that is necessary to acknowledge and justify foreign policy changes" (Mamadouh and Dijkink 2006, p. 357). The 2011 Arab Uprisings has yet again validated the above statement as it has resulted in the formulation of new foreign policy strategies for many countries, not just in the Middle East but across the world.

In Turkey, the end of the Cold War and the 2011 Uprisings have created new conditions that now shape the making of Turkish foreign policy. The changing global geopolitical context has clearly reflected on the foreign policy vision adopted by the Justice and Development Party (hereafter AKP) since 2002. A notable element of the AKP's vision has been the party's "reformation" of the Turkish policy toward Cyprus. As such, the focus of this study is to study the way in which the AKP has developed its Cyprus policy within the context of its broader Eastern Mediterranean strategy. As argued by Ahmet Davutoğlu (2001, p. 179), the former prime minister and an influential leader within the AKP, Cyprus occupies such a key strategic location in Eastern Mediterranean that its significance cannot possibly be ignored by any state that wish to obtain considerable influence in the affairs of the Middle East region and beyond.

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The Foreign Policy Vision of the AKP

Single-handedly dominating Turkish politics since 2002, the AKP administration has embarked on an ambitious quest to invent a new political language and to put forward an overarching new narrative regarding the future of both Turkey and the Middle East (Duran 2013, pp. 91–109). The foreign policy narrative adopted by the AKP is based on an unconventional interpretation of the global balance of power in our age, claiming that the Western world led by the USA and EU no longer constitutes the dominant political/economic center of the world. Accordingly, the early twenty-first century has been marked by a dramatic shift in foreign trade volume and industrial production capacity, a process that has led to a rapid transfer of capital and economic power from the West to the non-Western world (particularly to East Asian countries and the Muslim World). This ongoing political economic phenomenon is evaluated by the AKP as an early sign of the forthcoming revival of the "greatness" of the Islamic civilization (Moudouros 2014).

Inspired by the above theory, many observers conclude that the party's approach represents a radical departure from the conventional Kemalist Turkish foreign policy followed throughout most of the Republican period.[1] The conventional foreign policy position had always insisted on the need to keep close ties with the Western world, particularly the USA and Europe, via membership to "Western clubs" such as NATO, Council of Europe, and the EU. However, the AKP's narrative—commonly employed by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in his public speeches—seemingly implies that the time of Western hegemony over the globe is coming to an end; hence there would no longer be any need to ally with them (Eyal 2016).

Nevertheless, a closer look at the overall foreign policy direction of the AKP reveals that the so-called "new" Turkish foreign policy follows roughly the same guidelines with the previous regimes and that the Western alliances of the country remains intact despite all the anti-Western rhetoric employed for the purpose of obtaining the support of Islamist and ultranationalist voters. This can be seen in the way in which the AKP administration has closely cooperated with Western powers such as the USA, France, and Britain in the Syrian Civil War as well as in other Middle Eastern conflicts in Libya and Yemen. Moreover, this is not an entirely unique situation that has only emerged after the chaos of the 2011 Uprisings as the AKP had also enthusiastically participated to the so-called Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative launched by the US President George W. Bush in the early 2000s (Laçiner 2004, pp. 3–7; Duran 2006, p. 290). Since the days of the partnership with the Bush administration, not much has changed in the AKP's foreign policy actions in the Middle East as the party still wishes to preserve its alliance with the USA and enhance cooperation with Washington in the Syria-Iraq crisis. Recent initiatives such as the peace negotiations (i.e., the "Astana Process") with

[1] For a critique of this popular hypothesis which claims that the AKP's foreign policy has shifted the country away from the West, see Göksel (2015).

Russia and Iran to end the Syrian Civil War do not necessarily imply that Turkey is in search of a shift away from the West; rather they suggest that a pragmatic approach is now followed to minimize the damages inflicted by Middle Eastern conflicts on Turkish national security.

Yet, it would not be entirely accurate to state that nothing has changed in Turkish foreign policy since 2002. The radical political transformation led by the AKP in the domestic level has actually resulted in a reconfiguration of attitudes within foreign policy-making circles (Aras and Karakaya-Polat 2007). The "strategic depth doctrine," conceptualized by Davutoğlu, constitutes a strong critique of the Kemalist foreign policy tradition and intends to offer an alternative strategic vision to not "de-Westernize" Turkey's orientation but rather to create "an autonomous, self-regulating, and self-confident foreign policy agenda that would remedy the hitherto crisis-driven Turkish foreign policy-making" (Birdal 2013, pp. 98–99; Kanat 2010, p. 206). The AKP's dedication to the EU accession process (particularly in the 2000s) attests to the party's commitment to a Western-based orientation, marking a break with the avowed anti-Westernism of the *Milli Görüş* (National Outlook) movement—the AKP's predecessor. Though it mostly preserves its ties with the West, the party's high interest toward the affairs of the Middle East is unprecedented in the history of the Republic.

With the end of the Cold War, Turkey's strategic importance for the West in the Middle East and the broader Muslim World has increased. Since the days of President Turgut Özal in the early 1990s, Turkish policy-makers have also pursued a more assertive and independent mode of foreign policy by which Turkey would be positioned as a "bridge" between the West and the East. Based on this earlier notion, the Davutoğlu doctrine has been presented as a grand strategy for Turkey to rise as a great power in the international political arena, "restoring the lost glory" of the country's Ottoman imperial past. As such, it is argued that Turkey has to become aware of its rich historical, cultural, and strategic potential in terms of shaping Middle Eastern politics (Yavuz 2009, p. 204). According to Davutoğlu (2004), "Turkey will act not as a peripheral but as a central country (*merkez ülke*)" with multiple regional identities, and it would assume key strategic roles, both in its region and the globe. Nevertheless, Davutoğlu rejects the notion of Turkey acting as a bridge as he argues that such an approach would relegate the country to being a mere instrument of the West in the Middle East; Davutoğlu's position is that Turkey should become an independent "pivotal" state in the region for its own benefit rather than for the purpose of spreading Western values.

Ibrahim Kalın (2011, p. 11), the chief spokesperson and senior adviser to President Erdoğan, argues that "Turkey today has a 'new story' and a 'new narrative.'" The AKP's role is to be the vanguard of a new foreign policy paradigm that should strive to move a hitherto periphery (i.e., the Muslim World) toward the center of global politics (Moudouros 2014). In other words, the AKP seeks to incorporate the marginalized Muslim World to the capitalist world system and ultimately increase the share of Muslims' economic and political power within it (Hendrick 2013, p. 241). As such, the Islamic and Ottoman references found in the AKP's foreign policy vision point to a new understanding of Turkey's role within

global politics. Above all, Turkey is described as a Middle Eastern and Eastern Mediterranean country and that it would be a leader in this geopolitical area. This area would join a world system dominated by neoliberal capitalism, this process would be guaranteed by Turkey, and Turkey would be an equal partner of the West as the guarantor of "stability" and "peace" in this geography. Peace in the region and the avoidance of conflicts with neighboring countries was referred to by Davutoğlu in his policy of "zero problems with neighbors" in terms of two distinct elements: firstly, geo-economic ambitions and relationships, made evident by the increasing volume of capital expenditures and trade that have occurred under the AKP government as well as the diversity of Turkish business partners in the region, and, secondly, nonmaterial interests in the generation of soft power which, it was argued, would create an ideological basis for Turkish policy in the Middle East (Altunışık 2008).

Ankara realized that in order to fulfill its foreign policy agenda, it would be better to try to resolve problems rather than sustaining the old xenophobic attitude which presumed that Turkey was "entirely surrounded by enemies on all fronts" (Hale 2009, p. 156). Thus, the AKP "built its strategic importance not only on its geographical position, but on a foreign policy understanding based on the reconciliation of Islam with the system" (Uzgel 2013, p. 365; Yalvaç 2012, p. 173). Within the boundaries of this framework, the AKP has preserved its Western orientation—one of the fundamental features of Turkish modernization—as a cornerstone of its foreign policy, with traces of "Turkish-Islamic Synthesis." For the AKP, Turkey's EU membership and its strategic partnership with the USA complement each other, disproving the notion that Turkey would prefer to adopt a "soft power" approach rather than a "hard power" approach to Middle Eastern problems. The AKP's Cyprus policy should be evaluated in the wider context of the aforementioned understanding of Turkish foreign policy, strongly shaped by fluctuations within the trajectory of Turkey's EU accession process and the AKP's emergent Eastern Mediterranean vision.

The AKP and the Cyprus Issue

Turkey's policy on Cyprus was once referred to as the "state policy" and it was considered as a taboo issue in intra-party debates (Terzi 2010, p. 97). Since the 1950s, the period in which Cyprus first became part of the national and foreign policy agenda in Turkey, the Turkish elite has been preoccupied with the question of Cyprus (Kızılyürek 2002), and of what would happen when Cyprus was liberated, as Sevres Syndrome dominated the Turkish elite (Sözen 2013, p. 112). A series of violent ethnic conflicts in the island made it clear that the united Republic of Cyprus, which was founded in 1960, was not destined to last long—finally coming to an end with the Turkish military intervention in 1974. Between 1974 and 2002, numerous rounds of UN-sponsored negotiations have led to an impasse. In 1983, after the Greek Cypriot government refused to recognize Turkish Cypriots

as equals, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (*Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti*, hereafter TRNC) was proclaimed. The United Nations consider the so-called Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus still illegal today, Turkey being the only country that officially recognized it. Since then, the status of TRNC as the "babyland" (*yavruvatan*) to the "motherland" (*anavatan*) of Turkey has been equated with the political survival of the Turkish nation itself (Ibid, p. 113). According to this discourse, the salvation of the Turkish nation in Eastern Mediterranean could only be possible with the unity of the "motherland" and the "babyland" as there are "indissoluble and sacred ties" that forever bind their fates together (Ibid).

The end of the Cold War marked the beginning of Greek Cypriot flirtation with the EU, and in May 1990, the Republic of Cyprus applied for full membership. The EU supported the membership application of the Republic of Cyprus and declared it fit for accession. By June 1995 it was decided that the enlargement of the EU would start with Cyprus and Malta. The final stage of the "Europeanization" of the Cyprus issue occurred at the Helsinki Summit in 1999 when a definitive solution of the Greek-Turkish conflict over the island and over the Aegean Sea was put forward as a precondition for Turkey's EU candidacy (Ulusoy 2008).

The Helsinki Summit affected the entire Cyprus policy of the AKP administration—which had recently succeeded the coalition government of Bülent Ecevit (1999–2002). The traditional Turkish state policy on Cyprus was based on the idea that "no solution is the solution" and the preservation of the territorial status quo by all means (Yavuz 2009, p. 224). The AKP administration diverged from the traditional approach and de-securitized the Cyprus issue for the purpose of removing the main obstacle on Turkey's path toward becoming an EU member. The "strategic depth doctrine" introduced a transition from hard power to soft power and adopted a flexible diplomatic stance on contentious issues with neighbors such as Greece, initiating in many ways a new era in Turkish-Greek relations. As such, the AKP adopted a new policy on the Cyprus issue as well.

The AKP's divergence from the traditional state policy on Cyprus had multiple dimensions and it marked the first notable clash with the Kemalist establishment. Firstly, changing the Cyprus policy was seen as a necessity in terms of Turkey's plan for accession to the EU. Secondly, by establishing a firm position concerning Turkey's accession to EU, the AKP presented a pro-European image and legitimized its hegemony in the country by winning the support of liberal and moderate voters. This move has considerably weakened the position of the Kemalist military-bureaucratic establishment that considered itself to be the "sole guardian" of the Republic and its vision of Western modernity—allowing the AKP to gain the popular support required to challenge other hitherto "official policies" of the establishment (Kaliber 2012, p. 231).

At first, the AKP was careful enough to not be seen as directly opposing the traditional Cyprus policy. At the end of 2001, Tuncay Özilhan—the chairman of TÜSİAD (the Turkish Industry and Business Association)—publically criticized the uncompromising attitude of the Turkish Cypriot leader, Rauf Denktaş, and

Ankara's policy on Cyprus. In response, the then Prime Minister Erdoğan took a stand against him and claimed that his statements were "unfortunate." He went on to say that "it is a mistake to see the Cyprus Question only economically. There is also the political and strategic side of the issue. We support the stance of Turkey on Cyprus. We are in favor of a confederation between the two sides" (*Yeni Şafak* 2001). Partly because the party had not consolidated yet its power across the country, and partly because the AKP leaders—as most of the Turkish political elite at that time—thought that the Cyprus Republic would not join the EU unless the Cyprus Question was resolved, it initially adopted the traditional stance on Cyprus. The 2001 program of the AKP evaluates the Cyprus issue as such:

> [The AKP] is of the view that in the solution of the Cyprus issue, the presence of the Turkish population on the island, its identity and its right for self-determination cannot be ignored. It believes that the solution in Cyprus must be based on an agreement between the two States present on the island and that the admission of the Greek Cypriot Section into the European Union before the resolution of this problem will make this problem more complex. (*AK Parti* 2001)

Despite what the above program states, the AKP adopted a new rhetoric on the Cyprus issue shortly after it came to power in 2002 (Çelenk 2007, p. 351). Erdoğan argued on several occasions that the TRNC's isolation from the international community was a result of the 30-year-old state policy toward the island and that a radical change was necessary—namely, the adoption of a resolution proposal based on the Belgian model. This dramatic shift in the Cyprus policy was a major step in the country's then-ongoing Europeanization policy which was first set into motion when the AKP approved several legal reforms intended to harmonize Turkey's legal system with the EU standards. Erdoğan's progressive Cyprus policy was well received in Brussels during discussions of Kofi Annan's UN plan for uniting the island, popularly known as the "Annan Plan." However, this move elicited a strong reaction from the Kemalist establishment, in particular from the armed forces which suspected that Erdoğan was "intending to give up Cyprus for EU accession talks which, he calculates, would also weaken the military's role in politics and secure his own political survival" (Fokas 2005).

Encouraged by the acceleration of Turkey's EU candidacy process and by the support of pro-European business circles centered around TÜSİAD, soon the AKP's divergent views on the Cyprus issue had also reflected on the party's program (Kyris 2014, pp. 11–28):

> Our Party believes that a solution to the Cyprus Question must definitely be found. There is no doubt that in the solution of the issue, the presence of the Turkish population on the island, its identity and its right for self-determination cannot be ignored. The establishment of a state administration, as in Belgium, by the two dominant communities is for the benefit of both sides. Without the solution of the issue, the admission of the Greek Cypriot Section into the European Union will make this problem more complex. (*AK Parti* 2002, p. 92)

The Cyprus Question and its prospective resolution served as a means of strengthening the AKP's domestic power through international success (Çelenk 2007). While the instrumentalization of Cyprus by the AKP was challenging conventional state policies and weakening the Kemalist hold over Turkish politics,

the AKP was at the same time gaining the support of external forces such as the EU and the USA. Throughout the 2000s, the AKP heavily utilized a pro-European foreign policy discourse—making constant references to “European norms and expectations to express Turkey’s willingness to reach a viable solution” on Cyprus (Kaliber 2012). On the other side of the coin, however, the Cyprus issue served the interests of the nationalist/Kemalist opposition which accused of the AKP government of “selling out” on one of Turkey’s “national causes” (Kaliber 2012). Among the latter group was the circle of Rauf Denktaş who had decided to vote against any efforts made by Kofi Annan through his representative Tahsin Ertuğruloğlu at the Copenhagen Summit.

Denktaş’s stance on the issue caused serious friction within the Turkish government in Ankara as well as in the TRNC, leading to mass demonstrations in which protestors shouted slogans such as “this country is ours.” The impact of this was also evident in Turkey (Anagnostopoulou 2004, p. 241), where the AKP leadership was seeking out a democratic solution. These demonstrations were the peak of Turkish Cypriot demands for reforms—which had first started in 2001 with the devaluation of the Turkish Lira and the consequent banking crisis across Turkey and the TRNC (Beratli 2011, p. 137). The AKP government embraced the demonstrations in the TRNC and made it clear that Ankara was not willing to condemn the mobilization of Turkish Cypriot protestors as Erdoğan stated on 1 January 2003:

> Cyprus is not Denktaş’s matter. We shall do what we are required to do on this issue. I do not support the continuation of the policy which has been sustained in Cyprus for 30–40 years. (Şimşir 2003, p. 257)

This environment led to the election of Mehmet Ali Talat in early 2004 as he supported the Annan Plan. Having seen the changes in TRNC politics and been aware of the AKP support for a solution, the Turkish military also adopted a supportive stance despite its reservations about not wanting to be the one held responsible for the lack of solution on the Cyprus issue (Terzi 2010, p. 100). In light of these events, Turkey carefully refrained from its traditional discourse and practices as those would affect both the outcome of the negotiations concerning Cyprus and Turkey’s EU accession. However, the Greek Cypriots voted against the Annan Plan in overwhelming numbers, as ultranationalist rhetoric had much resonance among the Greek Cypriots, leaving the Turkish Cypriots’ support for the plan practically meaningless.

Subsequently, matters started to take a different turn, putting the AKP and the EU at odds. The AKP remained pro-European, but hardened its position because of the unsatisfactory performance of the EU in fulfilling its promises concerning its isolationist strategy toward the TRNC. The EU made it clear that Turkey had to fulfill two conditions, one of which was the recognition of the Republic of Cyprus before being considered for EU membership. The AKP had signed the tenth Protocol of the Customs Union at the EU Summit in 2004, and accession negotiations with Turkey had also begun; however, the AKP refused to ratify the Protocol and made a declaration in July 2005 which stated that Turkey does not recognize the Republic of Cyprus. A few months later, the EU replied with a counter-declaration stating that

the "recognition of all [EU] Member States is a necessary component of accession negotiations" (Ulusoy 2009, p. 401). The Turkish decision affected the overall progress of the negotiation process for Turkey. In December 2006, the EU decided to suspend eight chapters of the accession negotiations with Turkey—partly because of a supposed lack of progress on the issue of human rights—and the negative atmosphere that had been dominating Turkey-EU relations continued to prevail.

While Turkey's EU accession process stagnated, the resurgence of the armed conflict between the Turkish armed forces and the PKK pushed securitization back to the top of the government's political agenda. Two court cases (i.e., the supposed coup attempts termed the "Ergenekon" and "Balyoz" trials) drove the ruling party from a "liberal moment" toward "autonomization" and the pursuit of "strategic depth" in the second term of its administration. However, despite the failure of the government's so-called Kurdish, Armenian, and Alevi initiatives launched in 2009, Turkish foreign policy flourished during this period which we can arguably characterize as the "Davutoğlu era" (Akkoyunlu et al. 2013, pp. 30–31).

Following the rejected Kofi Annan Plan in Cyprus and increased tensions with the EU, Ankara sought to pursue alternative foreign policy approaches inspired by Davutoğlu's strategic depth doctrine. Specifically, the AKP party program in 2007 stated that "the preservation of the balance of power in the Eastern Mediterranean area and the goal of sustaining the prosperity and welfare of the Turkish Cypriot people constitute the two main strategic targets of the policy of Turkey in Cyprus" (*AK Parti* 2007, p. 215). Furthermore, the document explained the Cyprus approach of Ankara as follows:

> As a result of its pro-active policy, Turkey – under international pressure until 2002 – managed to save itself from this pressure without making the slightest concession on its national interests and managed to obtain a large freedom of movement on the international level. Until today, not a single soldier has been lost, not even a square meter has been given away . . . Turkey sees the Cyprus Question as an issue of the UN and as such, it will continue to see it that way. In the forthcoming period, our strategy, which is based on the protection of our interests in the Eastern Mediterranean and the protection of the rights of the TRNC, will continue to be applied in a more stable base. (*AK Parti* 2007, pp. 216–217)

As such, Turkey continued to support the negotiation talks in Cyprus—albeit within the prism of a more securitized and Turkey-centered nationalist approach as the rhetoric used in the aforementioned party program was reminiscent of past Kemalist policies. Indeed, Turkey had been increasing its military presence in the region for some time. In 2010, a new Navy Task Force for the Mediterranean was created. Turkey's aggressive response to the UN Palmer Report on Israel's 2010 Gaza flotilla attack also revealed the increasing securitization of its eastern Mediterranean strategy as Turkey sent several of its large-scale battleships on a patrol duty to the region. A dramatic return to a nationalist balance-of-power politics in the region seemed imminent to many observers (Altunışık 2011). In this context, the election of Dimitris Christofias—a member of the Communist Party of Cyprus and a "pro-solution" politician—to the presidency of the Republic of Cyprus provided optimism for negotiation talks.

Once again, reunification talks were launched by President Christofias on the Greek side and President Mehmet Ali Talat on the Turkish side. The plan envisaged a "bi-zonal and bi-communal federation" with a single international personality consisting of Turkish and Greek Cypriot constituent states that would have politically equal status. Elections in the TRNC, however, brought the new round of talks to a halt, and in April 2010, Derviş Eroğlu, who expressed his commitment to hold negotiation talks for a viable solution, was voted into power. The Turkish leadership, expressing its commitment to reunification in accordance with the basic parameters of the Annan Plan, supported the new round of negotiations as well. However, the Turkish leadership was of the opinion that since it had already showed its willingness by approving the Annan Plan, there was no need to take further action until the Greek Cypriot side stepped forward (Kaliber 2012, p. 235).

The 2011 Arab Uprisings and the Turkish Policy Toward Cyprus

Starting in December 2010, the issue of the Arab Uprisings has taken precedence over the Cyprus Question within the Turkish foreign policy agenda. The Arab Uprisings have shifted the balance of power in the wider Middle East region as well as impacting on the region's relations with international actors. During the first months of the uprisings in the winter and spring of 2010–2011, the Ben Ali regime in Tunisia and the Mubarak regime in Egypt were toppled, while Libya's de facto ruler, Muammar Gaddafi, was killed. Although Turkey was caught unprepared by the rapid pace of the course of events, the "Turkish model" of the AKP administration was highlighted by many as the "best example" for the development and democratization of the Middle East region (Aras 2014, p. 5). The influence of the Turkish model discourse in the region had initially become apparent after the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations following Israel's invasion of Gaza in 2008. By the time the 2011 Arab Uprisings took place, Turkey's status as a model had already been invoked by a multiplicity of Middle Eastern and international actors such as the USA and the EU.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, during his tour of the "Arab Spring capitals," proved successful in terms of promoting the Turkish model and highlighting the country's increasingly influential role in the shaping of the regional agenda (Walker 2013, p. 230). Ankara took pride in presenting itself as a role model in the region and the Turkish Prime Minister even created the Office of Public Diplomacy in 2010 with the stated aim of "telling Turkey's new story to the world" (Ennis and Momani 2013, p. 1128). The AKP has monopolized the model narrative and used it as a source of symbolic capital in domestic, regional, and international politics to validate the

party's policies, approaches, and modes of governance. For instance, the Turkish model narrative was explicitly adopted by the then President Abdullah Gül:

> Once you succeed in raising and realizing your standards, then you start being followed very carefully by other countries; you become an inspiration for them. And once that happens, what matters is to combine your hard and soft power and translate it into virtuous power – for your immediate environment for your region, and for the whole world. (Ennis and Momani 2013, p. 1129)

The impact of the Turkish model narrative on the making of Turkish foreign policy can be seen in its attempted application to Cyprus. The election program of the AKP in 2011 stated that "the two main strategic goals of Turkey's policy on Cyprus are the protection of Turkish Cypriot rights and the creation of the preconditions for stabilization in the Eastern Mediterranean" (*AK Parti* 2011, p. 148). As such, a discursive connection has been formed between the stabilization of the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean area and the Cyprus issue.

In January 2012, Ahmet Davutoğlu expressed the political vision of the AKP administration at a public speech given in Kayseri: "In the 2011–2023 period, we shall meet again with our brothers at the territories we had lost between 1911 and 1923" (*Habertürk* 2012). Interestingly, Cyprus is one of those lands lost between 1911 and 1923. The geo-economic aspect of the Turkish model has focused on the country's growing economy in the past decade and promoted the role of regional trade, investment, and economic interdependence. In September of the same year, at a party event attended by Mohammed Morsi, Khalid Meshal, and other international dignitaries, Erdoğan openly declared that Turkey's proclaimed success under the AKP affirmed its status as an exemplar country (*örnek ülke*) not only for the Middle East but also for the broader Muslim World (Herzog and Akder 2014). Cyprus represents a prime example of the above approach as it demonstrates the attempts of the AKP to apply the Turkish model to the TRNC through the establishment of joint economic institutions (see Tahsin 2012 and Bozkurt 2014). and make "its economy… less statist and more free-market oriented" (*AK Parti* 2012, p. 69). The economy of the TRNC had begun to weaken by the end of 2007, and during the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, it entered a recession period due to a major decrease in its economic growth rates. At this juncture, Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot community were "transformed with Turkey assuming the role of a disciplining external force with aims to effect a deeper transformation in the economy and politics of the Turkish Cypriot community" (Bozkurt 2014, p. 84).

Turkey's political vision regarding Cyprus was made evident through the statements of the country's ambassador to the TRNC, Halil Ibrahim Akça, in the *Fortune* magazine in February of 2011, in which he defined Turkey as the "IMF" of TRNC. In other words, Cyprus had acquired a new position in the context of the broader agenda of Turkish foreign policy. Accordingly, Turkey's influence over the TRNC cannot solely be limited to Turkish military presence as was the case in the past, but it should instead become part of the broader geo-economic neoliberal modernization

of Turkey, the Middle East, and the Eastern Mediterranean zone as envisaged by the AKP. More specifically, the AKP seeks to transform Cyprus into a “testing field” of Turkish-Islamic modernization project. The ultimate goal is to replace the “old regime” of the TRNC with a new order that would be shaped by the Turkish-Islamic ideological framework of the AKP:

> The implementation of the plan for the creation of “Erdoğan’s Cyprus”. . . is going through a comprehensive reconstruction of the structures of the northern part of Cyprus in a way that it is not about a simple, technocratic economic change. On the contrary it is about a comprehensive reconstruction that would touch all the hitherto prevailing “inner reality” of the Turkish Cypriot community. (Moudouros 2013)

In this context, the election of Derviş Eroğlu—a self-proclaimed “conservative liberal” politician—as president of the TRNC (tenure from 23 April 2010 to 30 April 2015) has eased the application of the “AKP model” to Cyprus. The three-year economic protocol (2009–2012) between Turkey and the TRNC was implemented by Eroğlu, and this marked the beginning of a concerted attempt to reorganize Northern Cyprus in accordance to the principles of Turkey’s neoliberal model. Through the protocol, the nature of Turkey’s economic assistance to the TRNC was radically changed. The majority of the financial aid provided by Ankara for the duration of the program was allocated to boost the private sector. Following the geo-economic model, the AKP has clearly set up a strategy that defines TRNC as an area of investment and has been steadily increasing the volume of credits that are coordinated by Turkey’s institutions in this regard (Bozkurt 2014, pp. 97–98).

The austerity measures imposed by Ankara within the economic context described above resulted in a series of protests against the AKP’s policies on Cyprus. Inspired by the revolutionary spirit of the 2011 Arab Uprisings, what started as small-scale protests against Ankara’s austerity measures to curtail public expenditures quickly escalated into a wholesale objection to AKP’s patronage over the political life of the TRNC (Bahceli 2011). The demonstrators were described by Erdoğan as “provocative agents” working with “Southern Cyprus” (the Republic of Cyprus), and he strongly condemned the social movement:

> They [the protesters] are telling Turkey to get out [of TRNC]. Who do you think you are? What Greece is doing there [Republic of Cyprus] is the same as what Turkey is doing here strategically. Those that are fed and maintained by Turkey had no right to hold such protests. (Aköz 2011)

Erdoğan’s words reveal to some extent how the AKP evaluates the role of the Turkish Cypriot people in the island, namely, unquestioning obedience to the national interests defined solely by Ankara.

Apart from the above troubles within TRNC politics, Ankara’s foreign policy toward Eastern Mediterranean largely failed to reach its stated objectives. Turkey’s relations with Israel soured in 2010, and the Republic of Cyprus signed a series of economic cooperation agreements with Tel-Aviv regarding offshore hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation within the shores of the island (Gutman 2012). In recent years, energy politics in the Eastern Mediterranean zone and the issue of oil exploration rights around the island of Cyprus have become the subject of a

growing rift between Turkey on one side and Israel and the Republic of Cyprus on the other side. Turkey and the TRNC strongly protested the Greek Cypriots' agreements with Israel, Ankara threatening to completely terminate all Turkey-EU relations once the Republic of Cyprus took over the rotational EU presidency on 1 July 2012. In other parts of Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey-Syria relations collapsed in the wake of the 2011 Uprisings, while Ankara refused for several years to recognize the rule of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in Egypt and continued to refer to it as a "coup government." Thus, Turkey has been isolated in the Eastern Mediterranean without any allies. Ibrahim Kalın attempted to refute this state of affairs by arguing that "the claim that Turkey has been left alone in the Middle East is not true, but if it is so, then we should say that this is a precious loneliness" (Today's Zaman 2013).

Conclusion: Toward a New Era in Cyprus?

Recent developments have demonstrated that Turkey's so-called precious loneliness does not produce desirable results for the AKP administration's foreign policy. Not having any diplomatic relations with Israel, Egypt, and Syria pushed Turkey out of the picture of the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean, while the impasse regarding the Cyprus Question put Turkey in a difficult position regarding its relations with the EU and the USA. In light of these events, resuming diplomatic relations with both the Republic of Cyprus and Israel has become a necessity for Turkey in order to reassure Middle Eastern countries that the Turkish model is still valid and that political stability would return to the region. The oil and natural gas reserves around Cyprus have been presented by various diplomats and researchers as a catalyst that would contribute to stability in the Eastern Mediterranean area. In March 2013, an initiative was launched when Barack Obama visited Israel, leading Israel to officially apologize to Turkey for the Gaza incident. Turkey publicly boasted about bending the "mighty Israel," reviving Turkish aspirations for leadership in the region. In this context, the relatively positive—though never problem-free—relations between Turkey, Greece, and Israel in recent years have increased the prospects for a peaceful settlement of the Cyprus Question.

The post-2011 AKP policies toward Cyprus strongly differed from the earlier pro-EU and integrationist approach of the party. The AKP-led integration of the economies of Turkey and TRNC within a neoliberal transformation process has not achieved the success Ankara aimed for, instead resulting in social protests. Ankara has attempted to economically empower the TRNC vis-à-vis the Republic of Cyprus, yet at the same time, it has sought to increase the dependency of the TRNC to Turkey. Moreover, the AKP's post-2011 Cyprus policy closely resembles the old Kemalist/nationalist approach that perceived the island of Cyprus as an extension of Turkey, merely an area evaluated through the lenses of geopolitical, economic, and strategic/military interests. It is clear that in the forthcoming period, the Cyprus issue and the deadlock over the political future of the island will

continue to derail Turkey's EU accession process as well as creating uncertainties regarding Ankara's aim to establish stability in the Eastern Mediterranean zone.

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Part III
Turkey's Domestic Politics and Relations with Non-State Actors of the Middle East

Chapter 10
Reevaluating the Sources and Fragility of Turkey's Soft Power After the Arab Uprisings

Michelangelo Guida and Oğuzhan Göksel

The rapid economic growth and prodemocratic political reforms of the 2000s had propelled Turkey to the position of a regional power as it was ranked 25th in the globe according to the 2010 Soft Power Index, rising to 20th by 2012 (McClory 2010, 2013). Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, international politics of the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region has witnessed a dramatic transformation, and sudden changes have started to become the norm rather than the exception—particularly after the 2003 Second Gulf War and more so after the beginning of the 2011 uprisings. In response to the rapidly shifting geopolitical situation, Turkey has had to continuously reformulate its foreign policy. In this context, the possession of "soft power" has become a useful strategy for gaining more control over the outcome of international political issues, because it has become more difficult to compel international actors through the principal levers of hard power in our age (Gallarotti 2011).

As the following sections of this study show, the Turkish policy-makers have recognized the relevance of soft power for contemporary international relations and, at least since 2010, created various institutions to enhance Turkey's capability to influence foreign actors and international public opinion. The foreign policy activism of the incumbent AKP administration mainly concentrated on the MENA region, the Balkans, and Central Asia. The rise of Turkey's soft power in its surrounding areas throughout the 2000s has been recognized by many observers, leading to the emergence of a rich and ever-growing scholarly literature;[1] however, the unexpected consequences of the 2011 Arab uprisings (most notably in the case of the Syrian Civil War) have proven that both the scholars and Turkish policy-makers

[1]See, for example, Kirişçi (2011), Altunışık (2008), and Dinçer and Kutlay (2012).

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have overemphasized the ability of soft power tools such as cultural influence to enable Turkey to reach its foreign policy objectives in the Middle East. In this regard, the necessity for sustaining soft power tools with hard power reserves such as economic resources and military forces has been neglected, resulting in a defective understanding of soft power caused largely by the ambiguity of the theoretical framework provided by Joseph Nye—the founding father of the concept.

This study analyzes the trajectory of Turkish soft power under the AKP rule, ultimately reevaluating the debate in light of insights drawn from the failure of many elements of Turkey's Middle Eastern policy in the wake of the 2011 uprisings. As such, the study argues that a "fragility of soft power" has manifested in the case of Turkey because of the currently unconsolidated and problematic state of Turkish hard power reserves such as economic capacity and democratic institutions. Before proceeding to the empirical parts, a brief theoretical analysis of soft power is needed to critically review the existing approaches to the notion.

Soft Power Revisited

The political, economic, and information interconnectedness that characterizes the globalized world of our time has made the use of conventional military forces costly for states and, in certain conditions, even damaging to their interests. Analysis of military power has had a central role in international studies since the time of Thucydides. However, its use is usually condemned by the public opinion across the world today, and it also disrupts the functioning of national economies which have become highly interdependent. Alternatively, the states may use their economic strength to impose sanctions on their counterparts or make payments to obtain certain outcomes. However, sanctions are also disruptive of international trade, and payments in the form of bribes—in a context where there is little chance to control the flow of information—may produce unintended consequences. Hence, *power* in the modern world "increasingly rests on a nation's capacity to create and manipulate knowledge and information" (Wilson and Ernest 2008, p. 112). Consequently, countries increasingly resort to alternative tools to affect the behavior of other actors.

In the context of a shift of methods in the conduct of international affairs, in 1990, Joseph Nye introduced a new dimension of power with *Bound to Lead* (1990) in which he pointed that the USA was the strongest nation not only in terms of military and economic power (both of which he collectively referred to as *hard power*) but also in terms of a third dimension that he defined as "soft power." He later articulated the concept further in his book *Soft Power* (2004). For Nye, soft power is the ability to shape the preferences of others via co-opting, instead of coercing them with the use of inducements or threats. Soft power must be considered as a variant of state power, because—using Robert Dahl's (1957, pp. 202–203) classical definition—through its use, *A* may be able to cause *B* to do something that *B* otherwise would not have done. However, instead of coercion or payments,

A uses its abilities to shape the preferences, the desires, thoughts, and feelings of *B*. Another crucial difference between hard and soft power is that governments do not have full control over the latter, because much of soft power originates in civil society. American cultural soft power, for instance, relies much on the actions of nongovernmental actors such as Hollywood, Harvard University, Apple, Microsoft, or NBA (Nye 2004, p. 17).

According to Nye (2004, pp. 8–15), three sources—*cultural influence*, *foreign policy decisions*, and *political values and institutions*—constitute the main means to acquire and exert soft power in international politics. Nye presents a rather straightforward framework, clearly defining the particular role played by each factor in the emergence of soft power abilities. *Cultural influence* is perceived as "the set of attractive values and practices" that could be utilized by a country to gain the sympathy and/or support of other countries (Nye 2004, p. 11). This source of soft power is gained via the exportation of cultural goods such as literature, art, movies, and television content in addition to other means for cultural interaction between societies such as tourism, student exchange programs, and information exchange via government agencies, state-sponsored media, universities, or other research institutions.

Foreign policy decisions of governments strongly impact on the image of a country as other governments and their citizens alter their behavior toward that country based on its actions across the globe. As such, "foreign policies that appear to be hypocritical, arrogant, indifferent to the opinion of others, or based on a narrow approach to national interests can undermine soft power" (Nye 2004, p. 14). Countries must demonstrate a pronounced respect for international law, norms, and institutions and disposition against violence to gain legitimacy in the eyes of other societies. The active participation of countries in international organizations, the promotion of peace and stability, foreign aid, and visa policy are all tools to gain the favor of others.

The third and final element of soft power is the *political values and institutions* of a country. It is argued that affluence, the possession of functioning institutions, and political mechanisms that ensure the well-being and the representation of citizens increase the attractiveness of a country (Nye 2004, pp. 11–15). This aspect of soft power is mostly associated with democratization and political stability—the liberal democratic regimes and developed economies of the West such as the USA, the UK, France, and Germany being portrayed as countries that hold considerable amounts of soft power (Gallarotti 2011, p. 23).

All the aforementioned soft power abilities of states are inevitably sustained by hard power reserves because intangible power resources such as cultural influence and political values can only be spread through tangible economic and political power resources. In this context and contrary to Nye, Dahl (1957, p. 203) provides a more nuanced understanding of power, inviting us to look at (*a*) its *source* (domain or base of a country's power over another), (*b*) its *means* (instrument used to exert power), (*c*) its *amount* (extent of a country's power over another), and (*d*) its *scope* (the range, the fields in which a country's power is effective). The main distinctive characteristic of soft power is its *means*, which refer to different instruments than

hard power tools. Moreover, soft power may be argued to have a much larger *scope* than hard power. For instance, while the American and Western European hard power could not penetrate the socialist "Iron Curtain" in Eastern Europe during the Cold War years, their cultural influence could actually move beyond physical borders and influence Soviet intellectuals (Nye 2004, pp. 49–52). Nevertheless, despite their radical differences in practice, the *sources* of soft power appear to be essentially the same with hard power.

Nye's formulation of soft power has gained much popularity in recent years, yet it has been also highly criticized. Perceiving soft power as "a huge conceptual misstep in the right direction" (Baldwin 2002, p. 186) may be too ungenerous, yet the framework of Nye undoubtedly suffers from a major conceptual shortcoming. Nye (2002, p. 5) himself states that "hard and soft powers are related and can reinforce each other," but he does not investigate the manner of this interaction and insist somewhat ambiguously that "soft power is not simply the reflection of hard power" (2002, p. 6). To substantiate his argument, he brings up the case of the Vatican which may actually be used against him. As argued by Nye, the city-state of the Vatican is certainly an example of a state that seemingly does not possess much hard power, but one that can potentially exercise an effective soft power derived from its "intangible" and symbolic power. However, we should also remember—and this point constitutes a major gap in Nye's whole soft power hypothesis—that the established global network of the Catholic Church actually provides the Vatican with quite tangible, unique, and powerful *means* to distribute its soft power across the world. *Therefore, the soft power of the Vatican, and in fact the soft power of all states, is actually indirectly derived from hard power reserves such as economic resources.*

At this point and before proceeding to the case of Turkey, a caveat is necessary to effectively grasp the particular understanding of soft power utilized in this study. Nye's soft power can often be confused with another concept, Gramscian *hegemony*. Robert Cox applied the latter notion—originally developed by Antonio Gramsci to understand sociopolitical relations within a society—to international relations. Cox (1993) perceived hegemony not as an order in which one dominant state directly exploits others but as social, economic, and political structures expressed in universal norms, institutions, and mechanisms—which collectively lay down the general rules of conduct for states and for those forces of civil society that act across national boundaries. The general rules in this case, obviously, are those which support the dominant capitalist mode of production (Cox 1993, pp. 61–62). Both Gramsci and Cox base their hypotheses on historical materialism—which appears too simplistic to understand the complexity of contemporary world—and presuppose a bipolar struggle between hegemony and counter-hegemonies within a society or the globe. However, despite the prevalence of American might in global affairs today, it must be noted that in regions where Turkish soft power operates such as the MENA, there is a context of "non-hegemony" where different actors compete with each other, the USA first of all but also others such as Russia, China, the EU, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Israel, terrorist groups, and various lobbies. All these actors possess various sources of soft and hard power that influence regional affairs.

Soft power requires resources produced by academia, international media platforms, and distribution circuits—all elements provided by a strong economy. Without these means, countries are unable—in terms of the post-structuralist perspective of Jacques Derrida—to manipulate *textuality*, namely, to present a particular discourse in order to enhance the image of a country abroad. Derrida's reflection on the tragic events of 9/11 highlights the essential role played by discourses for enhancing the soft power of countries. For Derrida, the impressions that the terror attacks of 9/11 imprinted on the global audience fall under two categories: the natural indignation over the killings of innocents and the drumbeat of the media and political authorities that obsessively defined the attacks as a "major event." The distinguished philosopher recognizes the objective horror of the attack, but he also argues "that one does not count the dead in the same way from one corner of the globe to the other" (Borradori 2003, p. 92). This is due to the fact that the shock waves of an event are not natural and spontaneous, but "they depend on a complex machinery involving history, politics, the media, and so on" (Borradori 2003, p. 92):

> In situations and cultures where the media do not spectacularize the event, the killing of thousands of people in a very short period of time might provoke fewer psychic and political effects than the assassination of a single individual in another country, culture, or nation-state with highly developed media resources. (Borradori 2003, pp. 107–108)

In other words, the American soft power conferred (though not intended or planned before the attacks) a context and particular meaning to the event. In the short term, the dramatic *spectacularization* is created by the media and political actors. In the long term, the interpretation of historical events is transmitted by the academia. In this regard, Derrida also comments that:

> The event is made up of the "thing" itself (that which happens or comes) and the impression (itself at once "spontaneous" and "controlled") that is given, left, or made by the so-called "thing." We could say that the impression is "informed," in both senses of the word: a predominant system gave it form, and this form then gets run through an organized information machine (language, communication, rhetoric, image, media, and so on). (Borradori 2003, p. 89)

As such, the relations of power are determinant in how a particular event would be interpreted and sold across the globe. Only a country that already dominates culture, media, and foreign policy is able to impose a certain terminology and, thus, a particular interpretation and discourse that best suit its interests in a given situation (Borradori 2003, p. 105). In light of this, then, *soft* power appears to be inevitably bounded to *hard power*, which confers a position of domination to media, channels of transmission of culture, and effectiveness of foreign policies.

In the concluding section, the study returns once again to the above critique of Nye's soft power framework in light of insights drawn from the study of Turkish foreign policy after the 2011 Arab uprisings, which provides an appropriate case for critically scrutinizing the interaction between soft and hard power.

The Fragility of Turkey's Cultural Influence in the Post-Uprising Period

One of the most widely studied elements of Turkish foreign policy in recent years has been the rise (and subsequent decline) of Turkey's cultural influence in the MENA (Kaddorah 2010; Kirişçi 2011; Kalın 2011; Yörük and Vatikiotis 2013; Göksel 2013, 2014; Köse et al. 2014; Tuğal 2016). The spread of Turkish television content has been the most visible result of this influence. For instance, since the early 2000s, the broadcasting rights of more than 50 Turkish television series have been purchased by the Saudi company *MBC* (Yiğit 2013, p. 292). According to surveys conducted across the MENA, 78% of the respondents in 2010 and 74% of the respondents in 2011 regularly watched one or more Turkish television series (Yörük and Vatikiotis 2013, p. 2363). A notable evidence for the recent success of the Turkish television and cinema industry is the fact that the film, *Kış Uykusu* (*Winter Sleep*), by director Nuri Bilge Ceylan was recently awarded with the *Palme d'Or* at the 2014 Cannes Film Festival. In 2011, again at Cannes, the same director was awarded with the *Grand Prix*.

In the last decade, due at least partially to the success of its rising national flag carrier company *Turkish Airlines*, Turkey has also become the country that received the most tourists[2] from the MENA, while Istanbul became the top urban destination for Arab tourists, surpassing the city of Beirut which was the undisputed leader for decades (Yeşilyurt and Akdevelioğlu 2009, p. 67). Particularly in the 2007–2014 period (until the rise of terrorism and political instability in 2015 and 2016), several MENA countries—Libya, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen—became the fastest growing tourism sources of Turkey (Aygül 2014, pp. 410–412; Clayton 2014, p. 31). The main reason behind the dramatic increase of tourists from MENA vis-à-vis other regions of the globe should be sought in the visa-free agreements that the AKP administration signed with various MENA countries, most of which coming into effect in 2007 (Aygül 2014, p. 414; Kirişçi 2011). Visitors from MENA to Turkey increased from less than 1 million in 2002 to approximately 3.6 million in 2010, the share of MENA rising from 7.3% to 12.6% in the total number of tourists received per annum (Dinçer and Kutlay 2012, p. 3).

In addition to visa-free agreements, Turkey signed free trade agreements with Syria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Palestine in 2004 and with Egypt in 2005, all greatly contributing to the increase in the volume of trade, MENA becoming the fastest growing region in the trade relations of Turkey until the beginning of the Arab Spring (Yeşilyurt and Akdevelioğlu 2009, pp. 64–65). Turkey's exports to MENA increased from approximately €3.2 billion in 2002 to nearly €29 billion by 2012, falling to around €25 billion in the aftermath of the Arab Spring and the deepening

[2]It is important to note that intensifying terrorist attacks across the country throughout 2015 and 2016 (including an attack at the Atatürk Airport in Istanbul) as well as the failed 15 July 2016 coup has devastated the tourism sector in Turkey as images of an increasingly unstable terror-ridden country have made headlines in the global media.

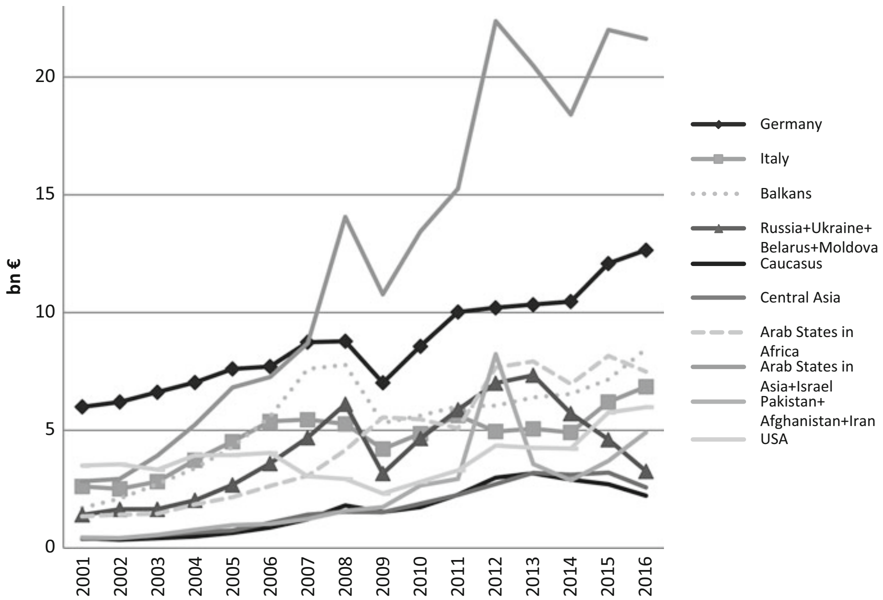


Fig. 10.1 Turkey's exports toward selected regions and countries

of the Syria-Iraq crisis after 2014. In 2015 and 2016, the Turkish exports toward the region have risen once again, thanks to improved relations with Gulf countries and Israel. The Turkish exports to the Balkans[3] also saw a sharp increase from €1.7 billion in 2001 to €7.8 billion in 2008. However, the Balkan economies—most notably Greece, Bulgaria, and Romania—have been severely affected by the 2008–2009 global financial crisis (see Fig. 10.1).[4]

Today, after a decade of economic growth (even if wealth has not been evenly distributed), Turkey has the largest and one of the most developed economies in its neighboring areas—a factor that enables it to possess a considerable amount of soft power via trade, tourism, and the export of cultural products. Nevertheless, the dependence of cultural influence on sustainable economic development has resulted in Turkey's soft power to be limited by various *fragilities*. Moreover, the deteriorating political stability of the country since 2013 has had a negative impact on the image of Turkey, directly affecting its economic development and soft power capacity.

Since 2012, Turkish economy has stagnated as GDP (gross domestic product) the annual growth rate has remained around 2–3% which is a dramatic decline from

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[3]Here, the following countries are referred to as part of the Balkan region: Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia, Macedonia, and Montenegro.

[4]Official figures are collected from TÜİK: https://biruni.tuik.gov.tr/disticaretapp/menu.zul (last accessed 6 April 2017).

the high rates of the 2000s—an average of 7–8% (Hakura 2013, pp. 1–2; Tuğal 2016). The growth performance has suffered mainly as a result of two external shocks that still directly affect the economies of the major trade partners of Turkey, namely, the aftershocks of 2008–2009 global financial crisis and the 2011 Arab uprisings. While the former have diminished the growth of Turkey's main European trade partners (Germany, France, and Italy), the latter triggered a series of political crises across the MENA region and resulted in ongoing civil wars in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Libya. The Arab uprising was immediately recognized by various Turkish exporters as a destabilizing force that would diminish the economic influence of Turkey in the region, and this prediction has been proven right over time, particularly in the cases of Libya, Iraq, and Syria where the amount of Turkish exports and investments have failed to reach their pre-2011 levels by the end of 2016 (Kösebalaban 2011, p. 111).

Turkey's economic development in the last decade, though arguably impressive, entirely rested on short-term financial flows and consumer-driven growth rather than domestic savings. It is accepted among political economists that developing countries which wish to achieve high economic growth rates are required to consistently sustain about 20–25% (of the annual GDP) domestic savings rate, yet Turkey's savings rate rarely reached over 20% throughout the late 2000s and declined to around 12% in the early 2010s—constituting a major risk for the sustainable development of the country (Karagöl 2013, pp. 126–127; Hakura 2013). Under such conditions, the "market sentiment" is essential for sustaining high growth rates as in the absence of large amounts of domestic savings; governments must be able to attract foreign investors via projecting the image of a risk-free, politically, and economically stable country (Welch 2013, p. 72). Yet, since summer of 2013, the stability of Turkey has severely deteriorated as the country has been dramatically shaken by one political crisis after another such as the 2013 Gezi Park protests, the 17–25 December 2013 conflict with the enigmatic FETÖ (the Gulenist Terrorist Organization), the escalation of the armed conflict with the PKK after June 2015, and the failed coup on 15 July 2016. The same period has also witnessed the intensification of the terrorist attacks of *Daesh* (ISIS) across the country.

Apart from the worsening political economic stability, another notable fragility of contemporary Turkish economy is its relatively low-level export competitiveness as Turkey was ranked as 45th out of 144 countries covered in the 2014 Global Competitiveness Index (Schwab 2015) and has fallen dramatically to the 55th rank by 2016 (Schwab 2016). As such, the index highlights a critical weakness in its capability for innovation and major institutional problems (mainly red tape and corruption). The low performance in innovation obviously points to the weakness of Turkish academia in producing original knowledge.

The Turkish higher education system has been increasingly able to attract foreign students. The largest foreign presence in its universities is represented by Azeri and Turkmen students which increased sixfold between 2003 and 2014. There was no Nigerian student and only one Somali student in 2003, whereas this number increased, respectively, to 513 and 459 by 2014 (Çetinsay 2014, p. 154).

Students are attracted by the relatively low tuition fees and the growing number of universities in the country. Indeed, since 2002, the Turkish government has invested large resources into doubling the number of universities and increasing the student population from 1.9 million in 2002 to over 5.4 million in 2014 (Çetinsay 2014, p. 54). However, this increase in quantity has not been accompanied by an increase in the quality of education and research. In 2002, the country ranked 21st in the *SCImago Citation Index* and rose only to the 19th position by 2015 (SCImago Journal and Country Rank 2015). Evaluated in comparison with the performances of BRICS countries, Turkey lags behind China, Russia, Brazil, and India while only being ahead of South Africa. This relatively poor performance is due to a lack of investment—particularly from the private sector—into research and innovation.

As noted in the preceding section, academia and media play crucial roles in distributing, manipulating, and marketing *textuality*, hence, directly affecting the soft power abilities of a country. In recent years, Turkish policy-makers have been engaged in an effort to develop an official foreign policy discourse that highlights the Ottoman legacy as the shared characteristic of Turkey and its neighbors, one that attempts to provide a legitimizing narrative to the growing economic, cultural, and diplomatic influence of the country in its surrounding regions. In this regard, İbrahim Kalın—an academician-cum-politician recently appointed as the speaker of the Presidency—states that "Turkey's descent from the Ottoman experience results in genuine familiarity with a large geographic area extending from the Balkans to the Middle East" (Kalın 2011, p. 20). However, the Ottoman legacy is actually a highly controversial and disputed matter, often interpreted negatively in the Balkans, the MENA, as well as within Turkey itself. Moreover, as Foucault (2002, p. 116) contends, the narrative of history always constitutes a battlefield between *counter-histories*: "the history that bears and determines us has the form of a war rather than that of language relations of power, not relations of meaning."

The Turkish academia and media have not yet proved capable in imposing a more Turkish-friendly image of the common Ottoman past to the surrounding regions. They have also failed to genuinely familiarize themselves with the culture and way of thinking of these so-called relative societies as, for instance, key mediums like Arabic and Serbo-Croatian[5] languages are still poorly taught in Turkey. The state-owned *TRT* (Turkish Radio and Television Corporation) launched a new channel in Kurdish in 2006, a channel aimed at the Turkic-speaking Eurasia in 2009, a channel in Arabic in 2010, and a channel in English in 2015. However, even though the quality of *TRT Kurdî* and *TRT World* has been rapidly improving, the channels have fallen short of effectively competing with established international media platforms such as *Al Jazeera* or *BBC Arabic*, failing to impose Turkey's own *textuality* to other societies.

[5]For example, there is only one department of Bosnian language (at Trakya University) in entire Turkey.

Turkish Public Diplomacy and Foreign Policy Toward the Middle East

The proliferation of public and scholarly discussions on Turkey's soft power cannot be understood independently from the foreign policy direction followed in recent years, particularly since the AKP came to power in 2002. Key figures of the AKP leadership such as former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and İbrahim Kalın sought to develop a soft power discourse based on the "Turkish model" of democratization, development, and stability in their writings and public speeches (Davutoğlu 2008; Kalın 2011). The AKP administration initially based its strategy to improve Turkey's international image on three main initiatives: (1) the establishment of a series of public diplomacy institutions, (2) a proactive foreign policy in the neighboring regions, and (3) a pro-EU foreign policy (in particular in the 2000s).

Firstly, an important development of the last decade has been the rising influence of state agencies for the promotion of Turkish soft power abroad, the most important of which is the *Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Başkanlığı* (TİKA, Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency). In 1992, TİKA was established within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 2011, it was reformed and placed within the Prime Ministry to highlight its growing importance, yet the scope of the institution was already extended in 2002 to cover 120 countries, ranging from the Pacific to Central Asia, Middle East, Africa, and the Balkans.[6] Most of its coordination offices and activities, however, are concentrated in predominantly Muslim countries of the Balkans and MENA. By 2002, TİKA had coordinated the delivery of $85 million in foreign aid. This figure rose to $967 million in 2010 and more than $3.5 billion in 2014. Since 2013, the main beneficiary of foreign aid has been Syria which has been devastated by the ongoing civil war.

An important role is also played by the *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (the Presidency for Religious Affairs), which was established in March 1924 as part of the Kemalist reforms to create a secular state. *Diyanet* was essentially an institution responsible for managing the affairs of Islam inside Turkey. However, the increasing presence of Turkish workers in Western Europe since the 1960s has created the need for *Diyanet* to provide religious services abroad as well. Since the 1980s, *Diyanet* has sent staff members to Turkish communities in Europe. In the 1990s, with the collapse of communist regimes in the Balkans and Central Asia, *Diyanet* participated in the rebuilding of religious institutions and the training of staff in predominantly Muslim countries. In the period between 1992 and 2007, 1546 students at the high school level and 2558 at the undergraduate level came from the Balkans and former Soviet republics to receive religious training (Dere 2008, p. 298).

In 2010, the government established the Office of Public Diplomacy (*Kamu Diplomasi Koordinatörlüğü*) linked to the Prime Ministry, which is responsible for

[6]For more information about TİKA, see http://www.tika.gov.tr/en/about-us/1. See also Özkan and Demirtepe (2012).

the promotion of the activities of the Turkish government abroad.[7] In the same year, the government also created the *Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlığı* (Presidency for Turks Living Abroad and Relative Societies), which is responsible for all the issues concerning the Turkish diaspora, and it is responsible to promote initiatives to strengthen relations with Turkic or non-Turkic (but considered as "relative," such as the Bosnians and Tajiks) communities. Moreover, this presidency has the duty of providing scholarship for study in Turkey.

The AKP's proactive foreign policy toward the MENA and its intense utilization of public diplomacy agents such as the *Diyanet* have contributed to Turkey's soft power as Arab governments and public across the region have acknowledged the growing Turkish economic and cultural influence (Dal and Erşen 2014, p. 269). The willingness of policy-makers to utilize soft power tools and discourses is surely a necessity for the transformation of a country's soft power potential to actual effectiveness through foreign policy decisions.

Several notable foreign policy decisions of Turkey have dramatically affected Turkey's relations with the MENA societies in recent years. Turkey has engaged in a BRICS-like behavior in the MENA, acting mostly autonomously from its ties with Western states such as the USA—which positively impacted on the public perception of its foreign policy until the 2011 Arab uprisings (Öniş 2011, p. 50). In this regard, the Turkish Parliament's refusal to allow the US soldiers to be stationed in Turkey in preparation for the invasion of Iraq in 2003 constituted the inception of the popularity of Turkey in the eyes of the Arab public (Altunışık 2008, p. 49). The then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's anti-Israeli stance, demonstrated during the 2009 Davos meeting with Israeli President Peres and the Flotilla Crisis of 2010, also increased Turkey's soft power among the Arab countries as Turkey became the country with highest positive perception, while Erdoğan became the most popular leader in the eyes of respondents according to various surveys (Ayata 2015, p. 96; Akgün and Gündoğar 2011).

A key tenet of the AKP administration's foreign policy, the so-called zero problems policy, sought to settle the differences between Turkey and its neighbors through peaceful means and to consolidate friendly ties through economic, diplomatic, and cultural interaction. Even though territorial disputes and the Cyprus issue remain unsolved, Turkey has established friendly relations with Greece. However, the formation of an alliance with Syria in the late 2000s was arguably the most noteworthy achievement of the zero problems policy as Davutoğlu himself—the architect of the strategy—identified Syrian-Turkish relations as the "biggest diplomatic investment" of Turkey (Davutoğlu 2008). However, the Arab Spring has strongly challenged the sustainability of Turkish-Syrian alliance as well as the overall soft power that Turkey managed to establish over the years by suddenly destabilizing the politics and economy of the region.

[7]For more information, see the Office of Public Diplomacy, Vision and Mission: http://kdk.gov.tr//en/faaliyetler/vision-mission/8

The Turkish government was caught off guard by the Arab Spring and its spillover into the domestic affairs of the country, as seen in the case of the 2013 pro-Kurdish *Kobani* protests. The sudden political changes in the region illustrated the *fragility* of Turkish soft power as Turkey's economic and diplomatic relations with Syria could not provide Ankara with a strong leverage to shape the decision-making of its counterpart. Once the suggestions of the Turkish government for a peaceful transition to democratization were rejected by President Bashar Assad, Turkey has overtly sponsored and armed Syrian opposition forces against the regime (Phillips 2012, p. 1). Yet, despite substantial support from Turkey and other regional powers such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar, the Free Syrian Army and other so-called "moderate" forces have failed to unify the anti-Assad opposition in the country and to overthrow the Assad regime in Damascus. Instead, the violent trajectory of the Syrian Civil War has created several major problems for Turkey's national security, economic development, and political stability.

Firstly, Turkey has accepted approximately 3 million Syrian refugees fleeing the conflict—an unexpected development that has dramatically strained the limited economic resources of the country while resulting in ethnic tensions between two victimized groups: the Syrian refugees in search of a safe heaven and the unskilled Turkish laborers who have found it increasingly difficult to compete with the desperate Syrian refugees in the job market. Secondly, the Assad regime—which has become an avowed enemy of Ankara during the war—has won major military victories against the Free Syrian Army, the latest of which is the successful capture of Aleppo in December 2016. As such, the AKP administration has begrudgingly entered into diplomatic negotiations with allies of Damascus, namely, Russia and Iran, for the purpose of peacefully resolving the Syrian Civil War. Considering that the original plan of Ankara and the Free Syrian Army was the overthrow of President Assad, it can be argued that Turkey and its local proxies in the conflict have suffered a decisive defeat and that they have radically drifted away from their broad strategic aims toward much more limited tactical objectives.

Thirdly, *Daesh* has considerably benefited from the chaos of the Syrian Civil War, declaring the Syrian city of al-Raqqa its capital and running rampart across the country. The rise of *Daesh* constituted a grave national security threat to Turkey as it constantly targeted Turkish towns and cities near the Syrian border (e.g., in Kilis and Hatay provinces) with missiles and bombing attacks. As such, the AKP has been forced to launch a large-scale military intervention (code-named Operation Euphrates Shield) into Syria itself for the following purposes: (1) eliminating the cross-border attacks of *Daesh*, (2) preventing the Kurdish-controlled PYD cantons in northern Syria from unification, (3) and creating a no-fly safety corridor that can be used to gradually transfer the Syrian refugees living in Turkey and/or preventing new waves of refugees into the country. At the time of the writing of this study, Turkish armed forces (with the support of local Free Syrian Army units) has ended its Operation Euphrates Shield after the successful capture of al-Bab after violent clashes with *Daesh*.

Fourthly, another consequence of the civil war has been the emergence of a de facto independent Kurdish polity in northern Syria, covering almost the entirety of

the Turkey-Syria border. This entity is ruled by the PYD and has close ties with the PKK. As such, this development—not unlike the rise of *Daesh*—threatens Turkish national security. Turkish government sources have claimed that many of the bombing attacks launched by PKK-affiliated groups across Turkey throughout 2015 and 2016 were planned in and launched from the PYD-controlled areas in Syria (TRT World 2015). Moreover, there have been reports suggesting that the Assad administration has been rebuilding the old Syria-PKK alliance in order to punish Turkey for its intervention into what Damascus as Syria's internal affairs (Phillips 2012, p. 11). As such, President Assad has established new PKK camps in Syrian territory for the first time since the late 1990s (Kayhan-Pusane 2014, p. 125). In sum, the entire Syrian Civil War has been a disaster for Turkey. Moreover, Turkish strategies since the beginning of the uprisings in 2011 have been ultimately counterproductive in terms of ensuring its national security, sustaining its economic development, and improving its weakening political stability.

Turkey's Deteriorating Image: Political Values and Institutions

At the beginning of the 2011 uprisings, the then image of Turkey as an economically prosperous, democratic, stable, and culturally plural society caught the attention of MENA societies wishing to achieve similar levels of economic development and openness in social life (Göksel 2014; Akgün and Gündoğar 2013; Altunışık 2008; Kirişçi 2011). According to various surveys, Arab respondents pointed democratization as the main inspiration their own societies could potentially draw from the Turkish model (Köse et al. 2014, p. 17; Akgün and Gündoğar 2013). When explaining Turkey's soft power abilities, the former Prime Minister Davutoğlu (2008, p. 89) emphasized, above all, its democratization process and domestic political stability:

> Turkey now enjoys an image as a responsible state which provides order and security to the [MENA] region, one that prioritizes democracy and liberties, while dealing competently with security problems at home.

Hence, democratization once constituted one of the most widely noted elements of Turkey's soft power in the MENA. As such, it is clear that any perceived violation of the principles of democratic life would naturally have a negative impact on the validity of Turkey's so-called modernity model and, with it, its overall soft power in the MENA region. The TESEV polls show that the positive perception of Turkey by the MENA public began to decrease in 2013, the main reasons offered by respondents being the numerous problems in terms of ensuring domestic stability and the deteriorating democratization trajectory of the country (Akgün and Gündoğar 2013). In the third term of the AKP's rule and particularly after the beginning of the Gezi Park protests in the summer of 2013, all three elements—economic development, political stability, and democratization—that constituted the so-called Turkish

model for neighboring societies began to face challenges and risks which resulted in Turkey's soft power to be increasingly *fragile* since then.

In the early 2000s, the AKP showed determination to implement all the reform packages required for the EU accession to begin. After the Helsinki Summit, several conditions were placed for the official beginning of the accession negotiations—a crucial one being the reduction of the military's role in Turkish political life to complement the other democratization reforms. One of the main achievements of the AKP seemed to be the elimination of the long-established tradition of Kemalist military tutelage over civilian governments. However, another military coup attempt—this time organized by the FETÖ cadres who rose in ranks of the armed forces with the blessing of the AKP administration itself—was launched on 15 July 2016. This time, the coup has failed, but the entire dramatic episode has raised questions over narratives that evaluated the earlier strategy of the AKP toward the military as a success story of democratization. It appears that there are still many who believe that armed forces can be possibly be used to "conquer" the state from within.

Apart from the intensifying terror attacks and the failed coup, a notable factor that has negatively affected the domestic stability and image of Turkey since 2013 has been the growing ideological polarization in the country, the society seemingly divided into several clashing communities with irreconcilable sociopolitical visions: the Kurdish nationalists, the supporters of the AKP administration, and the opponents of the AKP (the last group no longer consisting solely of secularists, Turkish nationalists, or leftists as Islamist groups such as the FETÖ have also moved to this camp).[8] Social division by itself would not necessarily increase instability and political/economic risks in a country that can cope with it peacefully, but it has led to recurring violent clashes in the streets of Turkey as seen during the 2013 Gezi Park protests and the 2014 *Kobani* protests—both incidents resulting in deaths and injuries of numerous protestors and security personnel.

International media showed unprecedented interest in broadcasting the protest movements and the street clashes, which has resulted in a severe "image decline" for Turkey as it now appears as a highly instable country with problems in governability albeit the countrywide authority of the central government in Ankara has remained intact. The European media now appears to have completely lost its belief in the capability of Turkey to align to European democratic standards, instead steadily shifting toward illiberal populism (Göksel 2016). Elsewhere, the image of Turkey has been in a downward trend as well, as indicated by the data of the public opinion polls conducted by TESEV in several MENA countries: while 61% of respondents in 2011 perceived Turkey as "a model" of development and democratization, this number dropped to 53% in 2012 and to less than 50% in 2013 (Akgün and Gündoğar 2013). Major problems in democratic practice such as minority

[8]For more details on ideological polarization in Turkey, see Ayata (2015) and Kutlay (2012, p. 119).

rights, rule of law, freedom of the press, and freedom of expression continue to jeopardize Turkish soft power:

> What we seem to be witnessing in the later phase of the AKP era is a kind of limited or majoritarian understanding of democracy with new elements of exclusion built into the democratic system. While the old regime provided little leeway for the religious and conservatives segments to express their identity claims, the new system has similarly limited the expression identity of the claims of secularists or minority groups, such as the Alevites or others. (Öniş 2013, p. 107)

Since 2013, Turkey's ranking in democratization indexes (e.g., of *Reporters Without Borders*) has dramatically declined which is a trend that has accelerated further after the failed 15 July 2016 coup (Kubicek 2013; Öniş 2013; Tuğal 2016).

Conclusion

This study sought to contribute to two scholarly literatures, namely, theoretical works on the concept of soft power and empirical debates on the rise of Turkish soft power in the MENA and its recent dramatic decline. Both bodies of literature have a common shortcoming in terms of failing to recognize the true nature of the relationship between soft power and hard power. For instance, even though the challenges posed by the Arab Spring on Turkish economy and foreign policy have been widely discussed, the emerging fragility of Turkish soft power has not been explored. As a matter of fact, most observers[9] perceive soft power either as complementary to or as an alternative to hard power. This is actually caused by the ambiguity of the understanding provided by Joseph Nye as he does not take into account the fact that both hard and soft power are derived from the same *means*, primarily the size and development level of a country's economy which fosters an innovation-oriented academia and an efficient media that can manipulate *textuality*.

By contrast, this study has employed a modified version of Nye's framework based on insights provided by Dahl and Derrida, arguing not only that soft and hard power are deeply connected but also that soft power is actually a consequence or a product of a country's hard power reserves. This revised perspective has been applied to the case of Turkey to show that when there are problems in sources of hard power such as economy, stability, and functioning institutions, the soft power of countries becomes increasingly fragile, negatively affecting their international image and the effectiveness of their foreign policy.

As the study has discussed above, Turkish authorities began to discover the potential of soft power since the early 2000s, and at least since 2010, they have built a series of institutions aimed to promote a positive international image. However, the government has excessively relied on the power of Turkey's so-called cultural

[9]Among the scholars cited in this work; while Köse et al. (2014) perceive soft power as complementary, Oğuzlu (2013) seems to suggest that it is an alternative to hard power.

heritage and the Turkish model discourse rather than taking into account the importance of hard power *means* to sustain and distribute its soft power. In fact, this study has argued that every element of Turkish soft power has encountered emerging problems in recent years, particularly since the beginning of the Arab Spring in 2011 and the outbreak of street protests in 2013: difficulties in achieving sustainable economic development since the early 2010s have limited the amount of economic interaction between Turkey and its surrounding areas. A substantial effort by the state and the private sector is required to enhance the effectiveness of academia and media so that both could contribute to Turkish soft power. In the field of political values and institutions, a new momentum for social and political reforms is needed to repair the damages done to its international image since 2013.

In light of this study, it can be concluded that acknowledging the concept of *soft power fragility* may help us obtain a more nuanced understanding of power in contemporary international relations, because this approach remedies a notable gap in the existing literature through exploring the complexity of the link between hard and soft power tools—as evidenced in the case of Turkey.

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Chapter 11
Comparing the Political Experiences of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt

Hakan Köni

Sociopolitical movements with "conservative" character tend to share some commonalities, particularly those operating in developing countries such as Turkey and Egypt. The presence of similar conditions drives these movements to adopt common organizational and programmatic features. Relatively less wealthy developing countries, in contrast to developed countries, generally tend to have similar conditions such as military dictatorship or tutelage, bureaucratic authoritarianism, low-level industrialization, and external pressures from the Western world for liberalization and integration into the global economy (Calvert and Calvert 2007). Close economic and political ties with the Western world often serve as motivating or limiting agents for conservative movements to refrain from pursuing radical "fundamentalist political projects" and instead search for power within the rules provided by existing political mechanisms (i.e., remaining within the status quo). It is argued in this study that Turkey and Egypt are similar in their possession of such a sociopolitical and economic background to some extent. Thus, conservative political movements operating in these two countries bear notable resemblances.

Conservative movements in both countries, in Turkey since the 1990s and in Egypt since the 2000s, have started to declare their support for ideas of democracy, human rights, rule of law, and economic liberalism. Political pragmatism, pluralism, multilateralism, and regional and global activism have also been part of their political discourses. The support of conservatives in Egypt and Turkey for liberal political institutions is often associated with their intentions to liberate conservative life from the pressure of top-down secular social engineering and initiate a social change program that is in line with conservative values. On the other hand, their support for economic liberalism stems from the belief that economic liberalism generally offers the best recipe for economic development in an increasingly

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globalized world. Multilateralism and dynamism in foreign policy has been associated with the motivations of conservatives to search for powerful allies against authoritarian blocs at home, but also with a broader Islamic-oriented foreign policy agenda which has long aimed to enhance the power of the Muslim world vis-à-vis the Western world. Though they share certain characteristics in their outlook, the conservative movements of Turkey and Egypt also have major differences. On the issue of secularism, for instance, the approaches of Justice and Development Party (AKP) of Turkey and the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) of Egypt strongly contrast with each other.

While the AKP declares itself to be a "passive secular" party that is respectful of Islamic values, the FJP entirely rejects it and seeks to Islamize the sociopolitical system in Egypt by any means. This notable difference between the AKP and FJP can be suggested as the main reason behind the divergent trajectories of the two parties in recent years: the AKP has been in charge since 2002 and has continued to consolidate its hegemony without directly challenging the established secular institutional framework of Turkey. By contrast, the democratically elected FJP administration in Egypt was overthrown by a violent military coup in 2013, and the party was subsequently banned in 2014 on ground of supposedly "being a dangerous Islamist movement"—albeit it continues to function underground.

The Political and Economic Performance of the AKP

The AKP was established in 2001 at a time when Turkey was challenged by serious socioeconomic troubles: the economy was in ruins. Since 1980, the average rate of inflation had remained over 50%. The growth rate of the economy was around 3.5%, quite irregular in composition and often with the addition of foreign debts to the calculation. Public debt was rising, and the funds borrowed were not utilized in effective ways that could bring considerable returns (Aydoğan 2004, pp. 93–96). In the political sphere, the country's standards lagged far behind liberal democracies despite its assertive claim of being a democracy. The military tutelage remained as a serious handicap for democratic life with members of the armed forces sustaining their legal and political privileges to intervene in the decision-making process. Problems proliferated in the text and implementation of the constitution particularly regarding freedom of belief and thought, press freedom, intraparty democracy, and social and cultural rights of minorities (Vacherot 2008). In its relations with other countries, Turkey was not able to enjoy cooperation and financial support from the West at desired levels because of the absence of a common resolution for integration with the West. Related to this, globalization stood as another challenge that compelled the Turkish society to assume a more inclusive view toward the global world with its political, economic, legal, social, and other norms and institutions (Köni 2014, pp. 6–8). In the context of this state of affairs, the AKP stepped into Turkish political life with a goal similar to that of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk when he left for Samsun: to end the decades-old political, economic, and social pessimism,

to raise the country to its deserved place among developed nations, and to shape out the new vision of Turkey for the future.

The AKP was the successor to the RP (Welfare Party) and FP (Virtue Party) in terms of the earlier career posts of its leaders (e.g., Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Abdullah Gül, and Bülent Arınç), but it substantially differed from them in its political discourse and program. The selection of the term of "conservative democracy" to describe the identity of the party highlights this difference. Though many of its leaders such as Erdoğan were victimized in the past by the secularist elites with political bans and imprisonments, the AKP did not seek revenge, and, in some cases, they even stated that the secularist reaction against them was justified to some extent. It was agreed that some RP members were engaged in anti-secularist activities in the 1990s with their calls for jihad and Islamic statehood in Turkey, and these prominent anti-secularist figures were excluded from the AKP during its formation process in the 2000–2001 period (Köni 2013, pp. 217–222).

Nevertheless, it would not be entirely accurate to say that the AKP leadership found all the past actions of secularists to be justified. According to the AKP, the Kemalist elite's understanding of secularism was problematic. The Kemalist elite insisted to follow the French model of aggressive secularism inherited from the Jacobin movement of the French Revolution, an approach that is infamous for its opposition to any appearance of religion in social life. Against this, the AKP offered the type of secularism implemented in predominantly Protestant Western countries (e.g., the USA, the UK, Germany, and the Netherlands) where social, cultural, and public representation of religion is dealt with tolerance and equality by the state without prohibitions and limitations. So the AKP declared in its inception that it was a secular party that did not aim to change the legal framework or the political regime in Turkey—as part of lessons taken after the 28th February Process[1] and also due to the concerns for integration with the global world—but it was noted that the principle of secularism had to serve to freedom of religion, belief, and thought rather than inhibiting them (Atasoy 2011, pp. 93–94).

Throughout its early years of rule in the 2000s, the AKP considered ideological polarization between seculars and conservatives as a threat to political stability in the country and avoided delving into the issue of secularism models or other social issues considered to be "ideologically sensitive" subjects. The party aimed to provide services to all social groups—regardless of their identity and lifestyles—and remained dedicated to building dialogue and cooperation between seculars and conservatives as well as between Turks and Kurds. It was hoped that these acts would "normalize" Turkish political life and create the preconditions for economic development and prosperity. Thus, the AKP of the 2000s was characterized by a non-ideological and centrist "catch-all" attitude. Condemning the ideological rivalries of the past, the party rather put its faith in mutual tolerance, pluralism, and

[1]See Atasoy (2011) for details on the 28th February Process and its impact on the ideological evolution of the conservative political movement in Turkey.

cooperation for economic and political development of the country (Akdoğan 2006, pp. 50–54; Kaddorah 2010, pp. 114–117). The AKP's political stance was therefore often identified as pragmatism. This pragmatism is not to be confused with opportunism which means the exploitation of political gaps for electoral purposes, but rather it means to be engaged in public service for the interests of the whole society—even at the expense of realizing certain ideological causes such as Islamism. Of course, the party was not entirely without any clear political goals, but throughout the 2000s these were seen as secondary to the solution of material socioeconomic problems.

For the AKP, a key factor for achieving its stated goal to normalize Turkish political life was its multiculturalist democratic vision. People from all different groups of the society were invited to join the party including conservatives, liberals, secularists, feminists, nationalists (Turkish, Kurdish and others), the Alevis, and non-Muslims as long as they were open to dialogue and cooperation for the future of the country. To this end, particularly the Kurds were given extensive opportunities to join the party, and many have become members of parliament—forming an influential within the party. In addition, many MPs of Kurdish origin (e.g., Mehmet Şimşek, Hüseyin Çelik, Mehdi Eker, Zeki Ergezen, Dengir Mir Mehmet Fırat, and Efkan Ala) have been appointed to key ministerial posts. A comprehensive democratic reform package was implemented to integrate non-Turkish nationalities and ethnicities in the country. As such, the following civic rights have been provided: broadcasting in non-Turkish languages (private and public channels) and non-Turkish language education (at private schools and universities), naming of children and geographical units in ethnic languages, and running electoral campaigns in ethnic languages such as Kurdish.[2]

A distinguishing characteristic of the AKP in the 2000s was its full support for contemporary political norms and institutions such as liberal democracy, human rights, rule of law, and gender equality. The introduction of greater rights and liberties also enabled the party to gain plenty of allies in the country and abroad. Particularly civil society organizations, the USA, and the EU sympathized with the AKP, providing it a powerful international diplomatic support base. The AKP's pro-globalization stance also compelled the secularists to behave more democratically and recognize the supremacy of civilian authorities vis-à-vis the Kemalist military and bureaucracy (Dağı 2006). The AKP's stance did not remain at a level of rhetoric but materialized with an extensive list of reforms. The reforms included the abolition of the death penalty, the recognition of the right to demonstrate without prior legal permission, the abolition of prison sentences to press crimes, the introduction of more severe punishments against torture and maltreatment, the limitation of the ban on international travel to a verdict by a court only, the introduction of the right to make personal application to constitutional court, the permission of syndicate membership, and the collective bargaining to civil servants.

[2]The package was approved by the parliament and the president with a law and subsequently published in *Official Gazette* on 13 March 2014.

The AKP's reforms also altered the nature of civil-military relations in the country: the frequency of National Security Council (NSC) meetings have been reduced from monthly meetings to four each year. The authority of army generals to make binding recommendations in the NSC meetings has been eliminated. The power to appoint the head of the NSC has been transferred from the armed forces to the prime minister. The number of civilian NSC members has been increased while that of the generals has been decreased. Apart from the NSC, all the supervisory powers of the armed forces on civilian posts have been removed. The jurisdiction of military courts has been abolished. And finally, the budgetary expenditures of the armed forces have been placed under civilian oversight.

Since it first came to power in 2002, the salvation of Turkish economy has been declared to be the main goal of the AKP. Economic instability was deemed to be the most urgent issue waiting for attention whose recovery was expected to serve as a solution to many of the sociopolitical problems mentioned above. The path selected by the AKP for this purpose was similar to that of the liberal conservatives of the late twentieth century in the West (i.e., Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher), who foresaw the pursuit of free market economic system, privatization of public economic enterprises, downsizing of the state, and cooperation with international actors of economic liberalism such as the IMF, the World Bank, the USA, and the EU. The AKP's economic agenda has also included a comprehensive social policy dimension which involved the allocation of huge public funds for health, education, housing, employment, and social security (Köni and Özdemir 2014, pp. 10–13). The AKP's economic liberalism proved very successful until recent years. From 2002 to 2015, the economic growth rate averaged at 5.4%, while the GDP per capita increased from below $3500 to over $11,000. The inflation rate was taken under control around 10% which was averaging 50% for the last 20 years. Though rising nominally, the percentage of national debt declined considerably compared to the GDP with total foreign debts/GDP falling from 38% to 23% and public foreign debts/GDP falling from 25% to 0.6% (Karagöl 2013, pp. 25–38).

The AKP and the Muslim Brotherhood in Comparative Perspective

The political, economic, and social structure of Egypt in its recent history displays considerable similarities with that of Turkey. What was referred to as "military tutelage" in Turkey exists in a more rigid shape in Egypt as a military dictatorship ruled by officers such as Gamal Abdel Nasser, Anwar Sadat, and Hosni Mubarak—a line of succession that extends to incumbent President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi who led the 2013 military coup. The Egyptian military, as the liberators of the country from British colonialism and founders of the modern Egyptian state, has adopted socialist nationalism as its ideology and imposed it on the education, legal, and political system. The army has traditionally been the major political actor appointing the

presidents, provincial governors, and leading bureaucrats, and it has held a sizable part of the economy in its hand (est. 15–40%).[3]

The Egyptian economy has been stagnating for decades with its GDP per capita remaining around $3500 by 2015, like that of Turkey before the AKP rule in 2002, urgently needing economic development programs. The rate of unemployment is high, and the purchasing power of most of the people has long been weak. Moreover, globalization has remained as an influential factor that compels Egypt to make a choice for integration with the global economy. Economic development, political participation, rights, freedoms, and opportunities promised by globalization have driven the Egyptian people to reconsider the virtues of contemporary political institutions. All these factors have influenced the particular ideational trajectory of the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan)—the largest conservative movement in Egypt—from the past to the present.

The Muslim Brotherhood was established in 1928 by a civilian activist, Hasan al-Banna. Until the capture of the government by Nasser in 1953, the Brotherhood cooperated with the nationalist "Free Officers" for independence from British colonialism and opposing the Jewish occupation of Palestine and Jerusalem. But after the establishment of the modern Egyptian state under the leadership of Nasser and his support for socialist nationalism, the Brotherhood started to set its way apart from the Nasserite state. While Nasser turned the country into an aggressively secularist military authoritarian regime with Free Officers occupying the entire administrative and bureaucratic cadres, the Brotherhood shifted from a civil society organization toward a political movement. In the beginning, the organization simply acted as an Islamic charity aiming to revitalize the practice and knowledge of religion which they believed to be badly neglected by Egyptian society thus far. The activities of the organization gradually expanded from invitations to prayers to the management of mosques, Qur'an courses, hospitals, numerous charity organizations, Islamic business companies, trade unions, and schools—the Brotherhood becoming the most influential socioeconomic and political actor at the grassroots level (Munson 2001).

As the devotion of the members of the Brotherhood deepened and as it started to present some political demands, it has clashed with the secularist armed forces in control of the state. The armed forces reacted to the political demands of the organization with mass arrests and prison sentences, while the Brotherhood turned to armed resistance by assassinating Prime Minister Fahmi al-Nuqrashi. In return, Hasan al-Banna was executed, and more persecutions followed over the years with the organization being totally banned. However, the Brotherhood survived in the underground, and the size of the organization has started to unnerve the Mubarak regime by the 1990s, leading them to search for ways of dialogue and negotiation. In the post-Cold War years, Western pressures for democratization was on the rise, and the global context has provided a political opportunity space for the Brotherhood legitimately engaged with political institutions.

[3]For more details, see Saed (2012).

In 2007, the Brotherhood "General Guide" (sometimes referred to by foreign sources as "chairman") by Mohammed Mahdi Akef declared the intentions of the organization to form a political party. Accordingly, the party would be secular but also have strong references to Islamic values and that it would function separately from the civilian branch of the organization. It would also be open to all Egyptians of all creeds and beliefs including Sunni, Shi'a, Christian, liberal, and women as long as they agree with conservative ideals (International Crisis Group 2008, p. 16). An extensive literature has developed on the compatibility of Islam with contemporary political norms and institutions, and the Brotherhood has gradually come to agree with them. Democracy, for instance, could now be seen as a more ideal political regime than monarchy or aristocracy in a predominantly Muslim society, because the original Islamic sources advised the election of the caliph from virtuous members of the Muslim *umma*, and hereditary succession was clearly prohibited in this context. Similarly, Islam was a religion of rights and rules to be smoothly observed and applied by the responsible authorities.

The AKP experience in Turkey was an example in point for the Muslim Brotherhood. According to a high-ranking member of the organization, Essam al-Arian, Turkey exemplified how a conservative/Islamic political movement could come to the government and how it is possible to introduce rights and liberties for the Muslims. Akin to the AKP, the Brotherhood would now follow the democratic way, enter electoral competition, and address the practical needs of the people as such. The AKP's success in economic development in particular was noted by the Brotherhood. The Brotherhood would also work with the IMF (International Monetary Fund), adhere to free market economic system, privatize unwieldy public enterprises, and introduce investment incentives (Sallam 2013). Not unlike the AKP, the Brotherhood would pay particular attention to social policy issues such as health, education, employment, and poverty and increase government funding in these areas as an extension of their religious civil society activism for the last 80 years.[4]

Using the momentum of the Arab Spring spreading from Tunis, the Brotherhood founded the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) in February 2011 under the leadership of Saad el-Katatny. The party displayed liberal features on a rhetorical level. It was a major slogan of the party to compete in elections for "participation rather than domination." Due to their fears from the armed forces and other rival groups as well as because of their pluralistic vision, the party competed for less than 50% of the seats in the parliament in post-authoritarian September 2011 elections, and it won 46% of the seats. It was declared that the first job of the FJP was now to introduce a democratic constitution in accordance with principles of separation of powers, fundamental rights and liberties, and parliamentary supremacy (Brown 2012, pp. 5–12). With the new Egyptian Constitution prepared by the FJP, the power and privileges of the president were substantially reduced in favor of the parliament. The duration of presidency was limited to 4 years with a second—and last—chance for

[4]This stance can be seen in the Election Program, Part III, of the Freedom and Justice Party in 2011; see pp. 17–21.

reelection. The constitution also revised the provisions on arbitrary detention, torture and mistreatment, discrimination, privacy of communication, and freedom of assembly and protest for conformity with contemporary democratic standards. The modernist outlook of the FJP to liberalize the legal and political system in Egypt bore significant parallels with the democratic reforms adopted by the AKP in Turkey in the 2000s.

The AKP also shared a similar view with that of AKP regarding the ideal type of civil-military relationship according to which the military would have to be under the authority of the elected representatives of the people. The most critical success achieved in this respect was the termination of the decades-old military dictatorship with the president and the assembly to be elected by the peoples' vote in a democratic way. Apart from this temporary achievement, however, the military maintained its autonomy from civilian control, all of its legal rights to intervene in politics when it deems necessary with its separate budget and its industrial complexes untouched. The constitution also gave the military the right to judge the civilians in certain cases. The reason for the extensive rights given to the military in the Constitution must be sought in the gradualism and pragmatism of the FJP rather than in their true opinions on the matter.

Despite their nuanced understanding of domestic balance of power and aforementioned pragmatism, however, the Egyptian FJP had a notable difference from the Turkish AKP regarding the issue of secularism and *sharia*. The party considered *sharia* as superior to all other types of legal-political systems, but it did not intend to introduce it in an undemocratic way from above as an imposition *a la* the Iranian Islamic Republic model. It would be up to the Egyptian people to decide on the matter with a referendum, and negotiations were to be maintained with all other political actors in the country. Therefore, while being fascinated with the performance of the AKP in Turkey, the FJP rejected the passive secularism of the AKP as it was expressed by el-Arian in reaction to then Prime Minister Erdoğan's advice of secularism during his visit to Egypt in 2011. Rather than being taken into account as a helpful suggestion, Erdoğan's words were considered as an unacceptable attempt to intervene in domestic affairs of Egypt (Sallam 2013). In this context, the Constitution prepared by the FJP stated that Islam was the main reference for the Egyptian legal system. The Constitution also introduced an advisory council of *ulama* to check the compatibility of laws with Islamic religion.

The Turkish Foreign Policy and the Muslim Brotherhood

To have a proper understanding of the foreign policy line of the AKP, one must take into account four major parameters. These parameters are (1) the political structure of the domestic environment the AKP was born in; (2) the capabilities, motivations, and preferences of regional or global actors including the Middle East states, the USA, and the EU; (3) the AKP's vision of "New Turkey;" and finally (4) the character and ambitions of foreign policy-makers within the AKP. The AKP's foreign policy line toward the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt—and the Middle

East in general—has been shaped as a result of a dynamic interplay between all these factors.

As it is very often stated by leading AKP politicians, the purpose of the party has been to build the so-called New Turkey. This is associated with the goal to change the political status quo in the country as well as the desire to transform Turkey into a "major global actor." In its early years in government in the 2000s, the AKP found a very hospitable social ground, whereas the Kemalist elites of the establishment seemed highly hostile. For the state elites, parties such as the AKP defending social, political, or cultural elements of religion was a challenge and a threat to be handled very carefully. The political rivalry between the RP and the Kemalists continued during the tenure of the AKP as well. Drawing lessons from the past, the AKP did not follow a confrontational strategy against the state elites, but it instead utilized legal ways to pacify them. Diplomacy was an effective tool in this regard for the AKP as it provided its support from international pressure groups such as the EU. Above all, the AKP sought support from regional and global powers to overcome the Kemalist challenge at home. In this context, a pro-EU foreign policy discourse and a domestic democratization and liberalization program proved useful for garnering its international support while weakening the legitimacy of any direct Kemalist threat toward its rule such as a potential military coup. The AKP has been highly successful in this objective by minimizing the political activism and autonomy of the state elites with external pressure for reform of civil-military relations from the EU. In this context, the AKP supported Turkey's membership to the EU.

The foreign policy visions of the AKP and the FJP can be compared in terms of several dimensions. Both parties attempted to break the monopoly of military elites over foreign policy-making. This was a crucial part of their overall strategy against the elites: the FJP also tried to find new ways to build ties with the major powers of the region such as Iran and Turkey. Mohammad Morsi was the first Egyptian president to visit Iran since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, and the FJP also tried to establish close relations with Saudi Arabia. Morsi was following in the footsteps of the AKP and was seen by many as Egypt's Erdoğan. Indeed, the rhetoric and style of his speech in the Non-Aligned Movement's meeting in Iran resembled the language Erdoğan: a harsh criticism of Israel, affinity with Hamas, and support for the Free Syrian Army in the Syrian conflict. Turkey and Egypt both have close economic ties with the West. However, the Egyptian economy is more dependent on the USA and the EU than that of Turkish economy. The country conducts more than half of its foreign trade with the USA and the EU, and it is provided with military aid from the USA each year worth $1.3 billion. Both countries are favorite touristic locations for Western countries. All these serve as historical, economic, and military ties that have to be maintained for national interests. The JDP and FJP share in their pragmatism in this sense.

Despite its multidimensional foreign policy similar to that of the AKP's, the overtly anti-secular attitude of the FJP has united the Egyptian armed forces with secular segments of the society, culminating into the 2013 coup. By contrast, the AKP has been more prudent on the issue of secularism and avoided any references to *sharia* which largely account for the divergent experiences of the two conservative political movements in recent years.

Conclusion

This study offers a comparison of the political experiences of the AKP and the FJP. It is argued that due to notable similarities in the sociopolitical and economic backgrounds of Turkey and Egypt, the AKP and the Muslim Brotherhood have adopted similar programs and styles of politics. The members of these two movements were highly fundamentalist in the past with common goals to introduce an Islamic state and society. Yet under the constraints of a number of factors—including pressures from a nationalist secularist group of state elites, increasing impulse and attraction of globalization, and dire economic circumstances of the country—both movements experienced a significant change in their character and identity. They have learnt to be pragmatic in order to survive. By adapting to the contemporary political environment with its institutions of democracy, human rights, and political and economic integration with the liberal world, they have realized that they could potentially save themselves from the pressures of authoritarian blocs at home. However, the Muslim Brotherhood was radically different from the AKP regarding the issue of secularism. The Brotherhood has never completely abandoned its goal to Islamize the regime in Egypt but merely changed its methods. This factor has ultimately created the preconditions of the 2013 military coup in Egypt, while the AKP has continued on its pragmatic rule as usual.

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Chapter 12
Turkey's Evolving Relations with the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) of Iraq Since the Arab Spring

Nathaniel Handy

Turkey's economic and political relations with the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) of Iraq have continued to deepen since the 2011 Arab Spring, despite shifts in Turkey's domestic politics and its other regional relationships. This study examines the history of Turkish relations with the predominantly Kurdish part of Iraq, the development of economic ties from the 1980s to the twenty-first century, and the shift toward deeper political engagement since 2008. It considers these developments in relation to Turkey's own internal Kurdish conflict and also in relation to Turkish foreign policy in the wider region, especially the trilateral relationship between Ankara, Erbil, and Baghdad. In analyzing Turkish economic penetration of the KRG, Turkish-KRG energy deals, and still highly fluid political realignments of the region, this study suggests three possible trajectories for the future of Turkish-KRG relations: firstly, a retreat to securitization; secondly, the consolidation of a Turkish sphere of influence in Kurdish regions as a buffer against instability in the Fertile Crescent; and, thirdly, deeper engagement with the KRG as a lever for wider Turkish engagement with Iraq and the region. This third trajectory, built upon the established AKP (Justice and Development Party) policy of "strategic depth," could be described as a post-Arab Spring "strategic depth 2.0" approach.

Introduction

What is Turkey doing in northern Iraq? What does it hope to achieve? What are the opportunities and dangers that have emerged after the Arab Spring? These are the questions this study sets out to answer by considering the history of Turkish

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engagement with Kurdish political forces in northern Iraq, its current economic and political relations with various elements of the KRG, and how those relations influence and are influenced by Turkey's domestic politics and its wider Middle Eastern policy.

Turkish policy toward the Kurdish region of northern Iraq has shifted dramatically over the past two decades. A variety of internal and external factors have shaped these shifts. Firstly, there have been substantial changes in the composition of the Turkish government and its relationship with Kurds within Turkey with the rise of the AKP to power. Secondly, the 1991 Gulf War and the 2003 Iraq War fundamentally shifted the balance of power within Iraq for the Kurdish region. Thirdly, Turkish foreign relations with regimes in Baghdad, Tehran, and Damascus—each with substantial Kurdish minorities within their state—have been through several different phases. And fourthly, the Arab uprisings that began in 2011 have led to international intervention and armed conflicts, which have radically impacted on the regional status quo.

This study begins by exploring the history of Turkish relations with the Kurdish region in Iraq. It considers the established Turkish regional policies of securitization and centralization that existed for much of the twentieth century and how those policies began to be reconsidered under President Turgut Özal in the early 1990s and later under the AKP administration after 2002. New foreign policy theories, based on "zero problems with neighbors" and "strategic depth," adopted by the AKP are important for understanding the process of engagement with the KRG and the wider Middle Eastern region.

The study then goes on to detail Turkish economic penetration of the KRG, analyzing the market share held by Turkish companies; the types of infrastructure, construction, and social projects that these companies have been engaged in; and the ways in which the AKP and KRG have facilitated this penetration by Turkish capital. This leads to the most crucial area of the KRG economy—energy resources. One of the most visible signs of Turkish engagement with the KRG has been the signing of numerous oil and gas export deals. In analyzing Turkish relations with the KRG, it is vital to understand the importance of the KRG as an energy source for Turkey, which is energy poor by regional standards, but has nevertheless invested heavily in this sector for positioning itself as a regional energy hub (Davutoğlu 2008, p. 91). Within this economic context, Turkey's political relations with the KRG are examined. In order to do so, it is necessary to consider not only the bilateral relationship but also the regional relationships that mold it. After all, Turkish relations with regimes in Baghdad, Damascus and Tehran have undergone dramatic shifts since 2010, impacting on Turkish-KRG relations and Turkish relations with other Kurdish groups across the region.

This analysis also takes account of the divisions within KRG politics itself. While a two-party coalition—between the "Kurdistan Democratic Party" (KDP) and "Patriotic Union of Kurdistan" (PUK)—controls the KRG government in Erbil, the two only concluded a unity deal in 2006 following a civil war within the Kurdish region in the 1990s. The deal led to PUK leader Jalal Talabani holding the Iraqi presidency in return for accepting KDP leader Massoud Barzani's

presidency within the KRG. A third political force known as "Gorran" (the Movement for Change) or the "Change List" has since successfully contested elections in the KRG. The delicate balance of power between these political movements is an important factor for understanding the Turkish relationship with the KRG.

Finally, this study evaluates the future of Turkish-KRG relations. Do they represent a new front in a wider traditional securitization policy, or a genuine departure from previous approaches? Has the Turkish government had to recalibrate its objectives in light of the Arab Spring? This study highlights the opportunities of engagement for Turkey in terms of security and economic and political power, as well as the dangers, particularly at a time of such strain within the Iraqi body politic, and with the instability that is emanating from the ongoing Syrian Civil War.

Background: From Securitization to Engagement

In understanding relations between Turkey and the KRG since the Arab Spring, it is necessary to examine the apparent shift from a traditional Turkish policy of securitization that adhered to a strictly centralized nation state interaction with Iraq to a policy of engagement with Kurdish political actors within the KRG. Turkey's relationship with Iraq—and with the predominantly Kurdish north of Iraq in particular—is rooted in the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. In 1920, the Treaty of Sèvres, signed by Ottoman authorities, proposed the breakup of the Empire. Within the ethnic nationalist discourse of the era, "the Turks" were to be left with a rump state in central Anatolia, while specific provision was made for an autonomous Kurdish region, with possible future independence (*The Treaty of Sèvres* 1920). However, the ensuing Turkish War of Independence (1919–1922) was, crucially, supported by many Kurds as a defensive Islamic war against infidel aggression (McDowall 2004, p. 186). The resulting Treaty of Lausanne established the frontiers of the Republic of Turkey as we know them today, bar one region. That region was the Mosul *vilayet* of the Ottoman Empire, which was contested by Turkey and Britain—the newly established colonial power in Mesopotamia.

In 1926, a League of Nations commission granted the Mosul *vilayet* to Britain, leading to its incorporation into the modern state of Iraq. However, this placed the *vilayet's* majority Kurdish and Turkmen population within a state dominated by Arabs, while many Kurds also remained on the Turkish side of the frontier (Çoşar and Demirci 2006). The ethnically exclusive nature of the Turkish nationalist project and the growth of a distinct Kurdish identity throughout the twentieth century have made the Kurdish issue Turkey's major security concern for most of its modern history. Though official and reliable figures are lacking, Kurds are generally estimated to constitute 15–18% of Turkey's population (*Central Intelligence Agency* 2014).

The Kurdish issue in Turkey has been coupled with the Turkish state's longstanding rejection of ties with the Middle East region, a policy rooted in

Kemalist ideology that saw Turkey's future, and the true path of civilization, as in Europe (Macfie 1994, p. 165; Mango 1999). Consequently, Turkey formulated policy on the region through what has been termed an "internal security lens" (Larrabee and Lesser 2003, p. 128). The territorial integrity of the Turkish state was to be defended, while Ankara consistently pursued ever-closer ties with Western Europe and the United States.

Turkey's Middle Eastern policy first shifted under the proactive premiership (and later presidency) of Turgut Özal in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Under Özal's leadership, Turkey integrated economic imperatives into its foreign policy as never before (Fuller 2007, p. 40), focusing on the Middle East as an area of potential growth and focusing particularly on engagement with northern Iraq (Kirişci 2010, p. 59). By the 1990s, Iraq was Turkey's leading trading partner, with trade volume valued at $3 billion per year prior to the 1991 Gulf War (Jones 2004, p. 19). However, political engagement between Ankara and Iraqi Kurds was negligible, and Turkey's interest in building ties with Iraq remained limited to communicating with the central government in Baghdad. The Kurdish forces in northern Iraq were viewed as a national security issue and nothing more. It was not until 2008 that the AKP government began to couple economic penetration with political engagement. The durability of the de facto Kurdish polity in northern Iraq concentrated Turkish minds, leading to a policy that has been viewed as one of managing the rise of so-called Kurdistan (Lowe and Stansfield 2010, p. 8).

The shift from a purely security-based response presented benefits for Turkey economically, in that it has not only brought direct links to northern Iraqi oil and natural gas resources, but also a significant commercial area and market for Turkish capital in Iraq. However, risks still exist connected to Turkey's internal Kurdish conflict. The Qandil Mountains of northern Iraq, under nominal KRG control, are a base for PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) attacks against Turkish security personnel and regular Turkish military incursions into Qandil expose the KRG's silent complicity (*Al-Arabiya News* 2011). It has been noted by Angel Rabasa and Stephen Larrabee (2008, p. 101) that "there can be no stability on Turkey's southern border over the long term without an accommodation with the KRG."

The radical shift from a narrow national security policy to one of multilayered diplomatic, economic, and security priorities (Altunışık 2007, p. 193) has been termed a "watershed" in Turkish foreign policy toward the region (Çandar 2009, p. 15). Rather than viewing northern Iraq through a solely security lens, the policy of the AKP administration has been to perceive the KRG as a potential partner (Gunter 2011, p. 138). In the late 2000s, this was mirrored by a renewed Turkish engagement with the new Iraqi state as a whole. In September 2009, a high-level strategic cooperation council was established between Turkey and Iraq, with a raft of bilateral agreements (Kirişçi et al. 2010, p. 6). In March 2011, then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan held his first meeting with President Massoud Barzani of the KRG in Erbil, the first time a Turkish prime minister had visited the region in the modern state's history. During the meeting, the leaders opened a Turkish consulate in Erbil that has been described as a "de facto embassy" (Gunter 2011, p. 138). A concerted economic and political engagement was born.

Turkish Economic Penetration of Northern Iraq

In 2013, Turkey was the world's largest exporter of goods to Iraq, totaling $11.9 billion, increased from just $1.8 billion in 2004. The bulk of these exports were iron and steel connected with infrastructure projects (*Turkish Statistical Institute* 2014). According to the Turkish Consul General in Erbil, more than 70% of Turkish trade with Iraq is with the KRG (Charountaki 2012), and in 2013, more than half of foreign companies working in the KRG—numbered around 1150—were Turkish owned (Natali 2013). In fact, Turkey has effectively become the single largest foreign investor in the KRG (Salem 2010; Natali 2013; *Global Risk Insights* 2014). This drive toward Turkish economic penetration of the KRG is not, however, a one-way policy controlled solely by Ankara. In fact, the KRG has actively encouraged Turkish capital to invest in the region through a series of incentives and reforms. A 2006 Investment Law granted foreign investors 100% ownership of their operations, tax exemption for the first ten years of operation, right to repatriate earnings, and, in certain sectors, free or subsidized land (*Kurdistan Region Investment Law* 2006). Considering that the region's economy has remain underdeveloped and stagnant for decades due the destruction of the agricultural sector by Baghdad and the sanctions regime of the 1990s, the KRG now offers massive opportunities (*Global Risk Insights* 2014).

Two major Turkish construction companies, *Makyol Grubu* and *Cengiz Holding*, have been central to the economic development of the territory controlled by the KRG. As a joint partnership, they have obtained the contract to build the Hawler Erbil International Airport at a cost of $550 million (*Erbil International Airport* 2014) and the $300 million contract to build Sulaymaniyah International Airport (*Hürriyet Daily News* 2007). In 2013, Hawler Erbil International Airport handled a record of 122,028 passengers and 38,572 tonnes of cargo, the major sector being the oil industry, with Turkey as the top international destination (27.2%) and 19.5% of all flights connecting Erbil with Istanbul (*Erbil International Airport* 2014). The Makyol-Cengiz partnership has also constructed water filtration facilities at Mapa and Erbil, while Makyol also won a $40 million contract to widen and rehabilitate the Erbil-Altın Kopri highway, completed in 2010 (*Makyol* 2014).

Ankara-based *Kuanta Construction* was a major subcontractor in the building of the new Erbil and Sulaymaniyah international airport air traffic control towers and other navigational aids and technologies (*Kuanta Construction* 2014). The leading Turkish construction company, *ENKA*, is involved in developing power stations in Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Duhok (*ENKA* 2014). A 30 km pipeline to carry gas from the Summail field to Duhok power plant was constructed by the Anglo-Turkish oil and gas company, *Genel Energy*, in early 2014—allowing the once diesel and light fuel run plant to run instead on gas (*Kurdistan Regional Government Ministry of Natural Resources* 2013a). Add to this such projects as extensive housing complexes in both Erbil and Sulaymaniyah built by Nursoy and Tepe's $260 million construction of Sulaymaniyah University, medical laboratories, health centers, bridges, student dormitories, sewage systems, banks, abattoirs, and gymnasiums, all built

by Turkish contractors. The Turkish company Cevikler is even responsible for the construction of the $65 million KDP general headquarters in Erbil, the perfect symbiosis of economic and political integration (*Hürriyet Daily News* 2007).

Everything from Genel's interests in the oilfields of Dohuk, Miran, and Taq Taq to Home Istanbul's first retail outlet in Erbil's Family Mall points to the deep economic commitment Turkey has made in the KRG, and with the contractors has come Turkish labor.[1] The growth in civil society contacts that were once scarce is illustrated by the new Turkish Consulate in Erbil issuing visas to Iraqi Kurds and providing assistance to more than 35,000 Turkish workers in the region.[2] The development of a free-trade zone in Zakho on the Turkish-KRG border offers a further encouragement to Turkish foreign direct investment in the region. The scale of Turkish economic penetration of the KRG would suggest that the trade is almost entirely one way, but there is a flow of investment from the KRG into Turkey on a smaller scale, and with the infrastructural development of the KRG's oil and natural gas fields, and the highly contested and political significant Turkish moves to strike unilateral deals with the KRG over the export of these resources, this equation may be set to shift in the near future.

The Development of Independent Energy Deals

By far the most significant factor in Turkish-KRG relations, and in the rising importance of the KRG on the international stage, is that of energy resources. KRG-controlled territory (excluding Kirkuk) has estimated reserves of about 45 billion barrels of crude, and if it were an independent state, it would rank sixth among the largest oil-holding sovereigns in the world (Gunter 2014). The KRG's Ministry of Natural Resources estimates output for 2015 at 1 million barrels per day (bpd), rising to 2 million bpd by 2019 (*Kurdistan Regional Government Ministry of Natural Resources* 2013a). The region has 14 operating oil fields under its direct control, with total projected flow rates for 2015 breaking down to 1.025 million bpd for export and 200,000 bpd (oil and condensate) for refining (*Kurdistan Regional Government Ministry of Natural Resources* 2013a). Alongside oil, the KRG also controls 200 trillion cubic feet (tcf) of recoverable natural gas.

Turkish access to energy resources is of prime importance on two counts. Firstly, it is vital for domestic economic growth. Turkey is reasonably energy poor and has far less domestic supply than it needs to service demand. With consumption averaging 706,000 bpd in 2011, Turkey now imports more than 90% of its total liquid fuel consumption. The vast majority—44% in September 2012—comes from Iran, with Iraq as the second largest supplier (*International Energy Statistics*

[1]Representative of the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq, Department of Foreign Relations, interview via internet, London, UK/Erbil, Iraq, 22 May 2011.

[2]Ibid.

Database and Short-Term Energy Outlook 2013). Turkish natural gas consumption reached 1.5 tcf in 2011, with most gas imports coming from Russia (58% in 2011), followed by Iran, Azerbaijan, and Algeria (*International Energy Statistics Database and Short-Term Energy Outlook* 2013).

Secondly, Turkish foreign policy under the AKP is to position itself as an energy transit hub for the region (Davutoğlu 2008). Turkey is indeed a suitable candidate for this role in that it is a relatively stable, democratic, and Western-aligned state in a highly unstable region. It is also geographically pivotal. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and the Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipelines pump oil to the Mediterranean and Turkey also control access to the Bosporus Straits, an international shipping chokepoint through which approximately 2.9 million bpd, mainly crude oil, flowed in 2010 (*International Energy Statistics Database and Short-Term Energy Outlook* 2013).

In May 2012, Turkey and the KRG first signed a deal to build two oil and one gas pipelines directly from the KRG into Turkey (Tol 2014). They then signed a deal in December 2013 to export oil along the first newly built $350 million pipeline with a capacity of 300,000 bpd (Peker 2013). The largest oil and gas operator in the KRG today is Anglo-Turkish Genel Energy. It pumped between 60,000 and 70,000 bpd from the Taq Taq and Tawke oil fields to the Turkish coast in 2014, delivering sales of up to $600 million (*Bloomberg* 2014). In November 2013, Turkey and the KRG also signed a Gas Sales Agreement (GSA) that forecasts the transfer of 4 billion cubic meters (bcm) per year by the end of 2017, rising to 10 bcm by 2020. By 2016, natural gas was expected to flow along an export pipeline into Turkey (*Kurdistan Regional Government Ministry of Natural Resources* 2013b). The major fields contributing to the GSA are the Miran and Bina Bawi fields. They hold independently audited mean contingent gas resources of 3.5 tcf (with a 75% interest for Genel Energy, the remainder held by the KRG government) and 4.9 tcf (with a 44% stake for Genel Energy), respectively (*Genel Energy* 2014).

The independent Turkey-KRG deals deeply antagonize Baghdad, undermining the established centralized order of the post-Saddam Iraqi state. Both Erbil and Ankara have, however, been keen to stress the compatibility of such a deal with their individual bilateral relations with Baghdad. In a visit to Baghdad in December 2013, then Energy Minister Taner Yıldız stressed Turkey's desire to seek the Baghdad government's consent to any oil deals between the KRG and Turkey (*Hürriyet Daily News* 2013). Meanwhile, the KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani stated in March 2014 that, "the KRG will seek a full settlement with Baghdad on the way in which the KRG's oil exports and oil sales revenues are managed and controlled" (*Kurdistan Regional Government* 2014). It is significant that Barzani refers to "the KRG's oil exports," suggesting that ownership of such exports lies with the KRG, rather than Iraq. The statement concludes: "The KRG shall at all times preserve its rights as defined in the permanent Constitution of Iraq." Such language echoes the position outlined by KRG Minister of Natural Resources, Dr Ashti Hawrami, shortly after taking office in 2006. He argued that the Constitution states the "supremacy of regional laws over federal laws, and can be invoked if no agreement is reached on the management of oil and gas resources" (Gunter 2011, p. 40). He also suggested that since the Constitution only made

mention of existing fields, in any newly developed and operational oil facilities, “the regions and governorates will have all the controls” (Gunter 2011, p. 40).

In the political maneuvers between Erbil and Baghdad, it is important to be mindful of the fragmented nature of the Iraqi federal government itself. While Turkish deals with the KRG have antagonized the Arab parties that lead the federal government, the Kurdish role is more nuanced. Not only do Kurdish parties enjoy the strongest regional autonomy they have experienced since the creation of modern Iraq, they also have significant representation in the federal government, including the presidency and the foreign ministry. The fragmented nature of Iraqi politics, and the deeply institutionalized role the Kurdish parties have now established for themselves, suggests that any resolution of the energy resources issue will only occur with Kurdish cooperation. However, Kurds do not control the Baghdad government, which has the power to withhold its 17% share of central government revenue (Natali 2010, p. 82). Thus, both the KRG and the Baghdad government have many ways of damaging the interests of each other. Turkey is in a position to play a potentially vital mediating role between Erbil and Baghdad.

Post-Arab Spring Political Realignments

For the decade preceding the Arab uprisings that began in 2010, Turkish foreign policy pursued greater integration with the Middle East region than at any point since the foundation of the modern republic. This integration is driven by a fundamental shift in the Turkish economy toward external trade links and energy supply diversification, but is also rooted in a political and cultural agenda (Kirişçi 2009). One of the key architects of this foreign policy has been former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, through his concepts of “strategic depth” (Davutoğlu 2001) and “zero problems with neighbors” (Kirişci 2011, p. 43; Öniş 2011, p. 50). These see Turkey exploiting its position as a “central country” (Hale 2009, p. 144) within a vital region of the world to develop and diversify its relationships and resulted in a raft of bilateral agreements with neighbors in the Middle East.

In July 2008, a High Level Strategic Cooperation Council was established between Turkey and Iraq, followed by one with Syria in September 2009. Turco-Iranian relations were also strong, including a 2007 Memorandum of Understanding to transport 30 bcm of Iranian and Turkmen natural gas to Europe (Rabasa and Stephen Larrabee 2008, p. 87) and the Tehran Agreement on nuclear fuel signed in May 2010 (*Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs* 2014). The Arab uprisings in North Africa did little to derail Turkish policy, but when they spread to Syria, the regional impact deeply undermined Turkish alliances. The Syrian civil war has pitted Turkish interests directly against those of Tehran and Baghdad, with the total collapse of ties between the AKP government and the Syrian regime in Damascus. Despite this instability, Turkish relations with the KRG have deepened. Moreover, the AKP struck a deal with the imprisoned PKK leader

Abdullah Öcalan in March 2013, who declared a ceasefire in exchange for AKP commitments to deliver constitutional and judicial amendments to protect Kurdish cultural and political rights (*The Guardian* 2013).

The need for Turkish engagement with Kurdish political forces can be seen as creating a necessary buffer zone between Turkey and the power struggles of the Arab world. To turn against the Kurds invites that chaos right into Turkish territory. Such an analysis can be drawn from statements made by President Erdoğan such as this from February 2014: "We never indulge in any discrimination among people. Therefore, the Kurd is my brother. The Turk is also my brother. So are the Laz, the Circassian, the Georgian, the Abkhaz, the Bosnian, and the Roma. They are all my brothers" (*Al-Jazeera* 2014). It is the language of Turkish national unity, and echoes a similar statement made by Atatürk in 1930 when he too was seeking to pacify Kurdish unrest: "Within the political and social unity of today's Turkish nation, there are citizens and co-nationals who have been incited to think of themselves as Kurds, Circassians, Laz or Bosnians. . .these individual members of the nation share with the generality of Turkish society the same past, history, concept of morals and laws" (Mango 1999, p. 20).

In engaging with Iraq's Kurds, Turkey is not dealing with a homogenous political grouping. In understanding Turkish-KRG political relations, it is vital to explore the internal dynamics of the KRG and how regional geopolitics is reflected in the party politics. The KRG has been run since the Kurdish civil war of the mid-1990s based on a power-sharing agreement drawn up between the KDP (controlled by the Barzani family, centered on Erbil, and aligned with Turkey) and the PUK (controlled by the Talabani family, centered on Sulaymaniyah, and aligned with Iran). This agreement provides for a combined "Kurdistan List" in elections on which both KDP and PUK candidates run. As a result, the Kurdistan List has enjoyed a stranglehold over KRG politics, maintaining a delicate balance between the national interests of Turkey and Iran. However, the KDP-PUK alliance has been accused of corruption and nepotism, leading to protests, social unrest, and emergence of a political opposition movement.

The Gorran Party, founded by former-PUK politician Nawshirwan Mustafa, has in the last few years seriously threatened the KDP-PUK alliance. At the September 2013 elections, the Gorran party took 24.21% of the overall vote, the second highest share after the KDP with 37.79%, with the PUK trailing on 17.80% (*Kurdistan Regional Government* 2013). It beat the PUK in its Sulaymaniyah heartland and came second to the KDP in the central Hawler province. The Kurdistan List deal will ensure that the KDP-PUK alliance remains in power, but it does now have a serious opposition. The emergence of the Gorran party from the PUK heartland of Sulaymaniyah has presented the Iranians with the necessity to engage with them. A delicate balancing act has seen Tehran placate the PUK after their losses while simultaneously wooing the Gorran party. Only by building influence with the Gorran party (which maintains its desire for neutrality from regional alignments) can Tehran possibly hope to counter the hegemony of the Turkish-backed KDP in the KRG parliament (Chomani 2013). For now, Turkish power in the KRG appears strengthened vis-à-vis Iranian power, but the shape of the new KRG government

and the political positioning of the Gorran party will have profound implications for Turkey's future influence in the KRG.

Conclusion: The Future of Turkish-KRG Relations

In this study, the evolution of Turkish-KRG relations since the 2011 Arab uprisings has been analyzed by examining the roots of the shift in policy from securitization to engagement, first in economic terms and then in broader political terms. What it reveals is unprecedented Turkish economic penetration into a Middle Eastern neighbor to an extent not witnessed since the creation of the modern state system in the region after World War I. Turkey is now the largest foreign investor by far in the KRG. With such economic control have come political dividends. Ankara has used its influence to ensure that the KRG government works in concert with Turkey against the PKK and its ally in Syria, the PYD (Charountaki 2012, p. 194). It could also use its influence with a steadily strengthening KRG to pressure Baghdad on issues of Turkish interest in the region.

In attempting to predict where Turkish-KRG relations may be heading in the future, it must be acknowledged that the Middle East is now experiencing a period of exceptional instability even by its own volatile standards and that the political and economic landscape has shifted and will continue to shift rapidly in the forthcoming years. With that caveat, three possible trajectories for Turkish policy are possible in the foreseeable future: the first can be termed "the retreat to securitization." This scenario is most likely to occur as a direct result of Turkey's internal relations with its own Kurdish population. Despite concerted attempts by the AKP at engaging with the root causes of the Kurdish conflict, a deep-rooted and institutionalized rejection of Kurdish particularism persists within Turkish society—particularly among nationalist segments across central Anatolia.[3]

In a 2009 survey of the Turkish public, 42.6% of self-identified Turks responded that the recognition of further Kurdish cultural rights would lead to the disintegration of Turkey, 52.1% felt it unacceptable to lift the ban on the Kurdish language, 73.9% felt it unacceptable to recognize the Kurdish identity constitutionally, and 19.6% refused to even recognize that any Kurdish problem existed (Aras et al. 2009). This makes the accommodation of Kurdish demands for greater cultural and political rights an extremely delicate and risky political maneuver for any Turkish administration.

A failure to produce real institutionalized change in Turkey has led to a resumption of hostilities by the PKK and that in turn has led to further Turkish military incursions into the Qandil Mountains of northern Iraq in pursuit of the PKK. Any Turkish incursions into KRG territory inevitably ramps up the pressure on the KRG. Further, a retreat to securitization could occur simply as a result of a widening gulf

[3] For more details on this argument, see Göksel (2015).

in relations between Erbil and Baghdad. An increasingly fractious relationship between the KRG and Iraq's central government may lead Turkey to conclude that an accommodation with Baghdad is in its own strategic interests leading to Turkish support for a recentralizing of Iraqi politics.

Finally, it might also be supposed that the near-total collapse of state control in northern Syria would also encourage a retreat to securitization in Turkish policy toward Kurds. While this has been the result in terms of Turkish-Syrian relations, it does not follow that this is the result for Turkish-KRG relations. In fact, due to the strength of the PYD position in northern Syria, and fears of a new PKK front from that territory, engagement with the KRG becomes even more vital, as it is the chief counterweight to the PKK and its heavily-armed left-wing affiliates in Kurdish politics.

The second scenario sees the KRG within a Turkish sphere of influence. The attempt to gather the Kurds of the wider region into an economic and political "Turko-sphere" (Gardner 2013) has been observed by analysts in the fallout of the 2003 Iraq War and the Syrian Civil War. This envisages a highly polarized region—likely divided along sectarian lines—in which the entire Fertile Crescent becomes a theater of conflict between the opposing forces of Saudi Arabia and Iran, expressed through a Sunni-Shi'a sectarian lens. In such a scenario, it is probable that Turkey would resist, as it has in Syria, being drawn into an overtly sectarian conflict, and would instead opt for shoring up a Turkish sphere of influence in its immediate border regions. Turkish influence in the KRG would be vital to such a policy, giving Turkey a substantial and militarily effective buffer zone in the form of the KRG's *peshmerga*, often recognized as the most effective and disciplined armed force in Iraq today. The collaboration between the Turkish military and the KRG's *peshmerga* against ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) forces in northern Iraq, including the presence of Turkish troops at the Bashiqa army base in Nineveh Governorate, is a case in point.

The third potential trajectory can be seen as the middle ground between the earlier options and sees Turkish-KRG relations as a lever for wider Turkish engagement with Iraq. Such a scenario would fall into the long-term pattern of AKP policy, pursuing former Prime Minister Davutoğlu's theory of "strategic depth." As such it could be termed the "strategic depth 2.0" option. It is a strategy built on the belief in the interdependence of stability and democracy and that Turkey will gain security through engagement rather than disengagement. This is the most advantageous course for all parties. The KRG has become a fact on the ground. Foreign direct investment coupled with exploitation of natural resources has made the Kurdish region Iraq's most stable and economically viable section. Engagement with the KRG serves Turkish economic and energy resource goals as well as political goals within its own internal Kurdish conflict. The alternative, a retreat to securitization, would be to the detriment of those goals.

The Baghdad government could confront the KRG over its growing independence, but this option is likely to only lead to conflict. Even supposing military success for the Baghdad government, it would be left, as previous Baghdad governments have been, with a volatile and ungovernable region prone to

insurrection and likely manipulated by Turkey. Baghdad ultimately has more to gain from striking a bargain with Erbil, even if it means further loss of central control and revenue. It also seems likely that Ankara will encourage a deal between Erbil and Baghdad. A fully independent KRG is a potentially volatile and unpredictable quantity. Conversely, a KRG locked in permanent conflict with Baghdad yet increasingly integrated with Turkey will strain Ankara-Baghdad relations. If Turkey facilitated a deal between Baghdad and Erbil while retaining its strong position in the KRG, it could be highly advantageous for the wider Turkish policy in Iraq and the Middle East.

By developing its relationship with the KRG, Turkey also has significant leverage within the Kurdish political landscape that it would not otherwise have. Close relations with the KRG allow the Turkish government to engage with, and be seen to engage with, an important element of the Kurdish political landscape. And if the KRG does unilaterally declare independence, better that it does so as a friend of Turkey than as an enemy. The success of a "strategic depth 2.0" approach to Turkish-KRG relations would also lay a persuasive blueprint for the resolution of Turkey's internal Kurdish conflict. Ankara could present the Kurdish political movement within Turkey with the success of the KRG within Iraq. Though Ankara may be a long way from delivering anything like that level of autonomy, faced with continued conflict, it may be willing to offer concessions that could profoundly alter the dynamics of the longstanding Kurdish conflict in Turkey.

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Chapter 13
The Arab Spring and the Emergence of a New Kurdish Polity in Syria

Şeref Kavak

This study seeks to shed light on the preliminary results and potential fruits that the era of so-called Arab Spring bears concerning the Kurds as an increasingly visible actor and an emerging nation in the region. Since the turn of the last decade, several countries in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region have witnessed to large-scale social and political upheavals that have since then been popularly referred to as "the Arab Spring," "Arab Awakening," "uprisings" or "revolutions", "grassroots movements," and "regime changes." Usually one considers these changes either as optimistically progressive as springs based on revolutions or pessimistically dangerous for the future of the people in the MENA. It cannot be underestimated that these protest movements have had devastating effects for the shaping of the region and its geopolitical neighborhood (i.e., Europe). In this context, the Arab Spring cannot be seen as an exclusively Arab-related phenomenon due to several reasons.

Firstly, the greater MENA has never been an Arab-only region due to the presence of large non-Arab communities such as Iranians, Turks, Kurds, Assyrians, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Circassians, Balouch, Greeks, Jews, and Berbers. Therefore any influential development taking place in Arab-majority areas would naturally have influences on non-Arab minorities living in these territories. Secondly, many of the seemingly subnational social dynamics of MENA are deeply connected to transnational political fault lines such as the Shiite-Sunni, Kurd-Arab, Kurd-Turk, Kurd-Iranian, Muslim-Jewish, and Arab-Israeli divides. Thirdly, the viral effects of the spread of universal ideas such as transparency, social justice, and democratic governance are bound to extend beyond regional borders and impact on (as well as being influenced by) the sociopolitical life of non-Middle Eastern developing countries such as Brazil, Greece, and Hong Kong where widespread discontent

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about social, economic, or political injustices has recently led to popular protests (Werbner et al. 2015; *The Guardian* 2013).

In this context, this study evaluates the case of the so-called Kurdish Spring[1] as part of a chain of seemingly local grassroot struggles which have been presenting themselves across the globe through a nationalist yet modern, pluralist, left-wing discourse for the first time since the homeland of Kurds was divided among four hegemonic regional nation-states (Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria) without the will of the Kurdish people themselves (Beşikçi 1990, p. 17). As argued by Ismail Beşikçi (1990, p. 17), who is a distinguished expert of Kurdish studies with a particular expertise on colonialism and tribal sociology, Kurds have been "divided, dissected, and shared through imperialist and colonialist policies."

Throughout the twentieth century, the aforementioned dividedness deprived Kurds even of gaining minority rights and has resulted in their very existence being denied by the ruling elites of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. For instance, according to the official position of the Republic of Turkey until recent years, "there is no nation by the name of Kurds, and every citizen of Turkey is Turkish" (Beşikçi 1990, p. 18). This approach had been adopted by Middle Eastern neighbors of Turkey as well, and Kurds were denied of their rights to learn and speak their native language in public. Kurdish demands for political rights had been completely disregarded—let alone their desire to obtain self-rule in Kurdish-majority areas. Therefore, today Kurds still constitute one of the largest nations without a state of their own (Chaliand 1993; Baser and Swain 2011). While Kurds are often referred to by scholars as a "stateless nation," major hegemonic global and regional actors of MENA have so far been reluctant to recognize the Kurds as an actor with genuine agency, in other words, as a sovereign nation with the right to decide its own political future within an international system dominated by numerous nation-states.

Before the fires of political emancipation movements across the MENA ignited a vicious civil war in Syria in 2011, Kurds were usually considered within the framework of minorities—with the exception of the autonomous Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in northern Iraq. A major consequence of the ongoing Syrian Civil War has been a radical change in the global perception of Kurds as Kurdish political struggle for self-rule in Syria has so far successfully established three autonomous cantons (i.e., Jazira, Kobani, Afrin)—a political development fondly referred to by sympathizers of the Kurdish political movement as the "Rojava Revolution" or the "Kurdish Spring" (Aretaios 2015). Until the emergence of two separate (and de facto independent) Kurdish polities in northern Iraq and Syria, the conventional minority status of Kurds stood as a major obstacle before the recognition of "Kurdish nationhood" even in certain provinces where they constitute the undisputed majority (i.e., parts of east and southeastern Turkey, northern Iraq, northern Syria, and parts of northwestern Iran).

[1]For a study of the "Kurdish Spring" through the lens of the "contentious politics" vs. "high politics" debate, see Göksel (2015).

Under these conditions, Kurds were "granted" extremely limited political liberties gradually and in a minimalistic manner depending on the whims of their rulers. The very methodology and terminology of "granting rights" has been a major problem in the context of the Kurdish struggle, reflecting unilateral government actions toward Kurds who are merely perceived as a passive "minority" at the recipient end of decisions even though they actually constitute the ethnic majority in their homeland across Turkey, Iran, Syria, and Iraq. Barzoo Eliassi (2011) uses the term "minoritisation" to explain the subversive impact of this phenomenon on Kurdish rights, a concept that applies to the coercive policies of regional hegemonic actors within the Kurdish homeland as well as to the sociopolitical circumstances of Kurds as a diaspora in various European countries.

The social origins and long-term motivations behind the Kurdish Spring can be traced to the post-World War I Anglo-French redesigning of Middle Eastern borders—namely, the Sykes-Picot Agreement. This secret treaty was designed to divide the Arab-dominated provinces of the Ottoman Empire outside the Arabian Peninsula, and it had created various zones of influence commanded by Britain and France (Fromkin 1989, p. 286). The Sykes-Picot political system did not empower Kurds as a nation in an age of nationalisms, and their disadvantaged situation has lasted until the implosion of the system from within with the ongoing Syrian Civil War and the related crisis in Iraq with the rise of *Daesh*/ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria). Due to space constraints, this study cannot cover the entirety of this long historical background, and the following sections instead analyze the contemporary prospects of Kurdish nationhood in the wake of the Kurdish Spring, with a particular focus on the emergent Kurdish polity in Syria.

The Kurdish Spring and Turkish Autumn

The historical roots of Kurdish Spring can be traced to the early twentieth century designing of modern Middle Eastern borders. As for its recent genealogy in Turkey, the 2005–2009 period stands as a crucial juncture. The collapse of the mainstream center-right/liberal[2] and leftist/social-democrat[3] political parties was one of the obvious results of the 2002 parliamentary election that followed the severe 2001 economic crisis in Turkey, resulting in the victory of moderate Islamist AKP (Justice and Development Party). In the early years of its rule, the AKP rapidly accelerated pro-EU political reforms and demonstrated a strong economic performance which reinforced its support base among the Kurds and the Turkish society as a whole. Although the AKP employed a liberal discourse and generally enacted such laws especially in its first two consecutive terms (2002–2007; 2007–2011), it has gradually fallen short of providing the democratic standards demanded by

[2]The ANAP (Motherland Party) and the DYP (True Path Party).

[3]The DSP (Democratic Left Party) and the YTP (New Turkey Party).

Kurds. Instead, the party has increasingly adopted an illiberal stance toward public dissent as seen in the recent crackdown of Gezi Park protests in 2013. In fact, the stronger the AKP has become in elections against the Kemalist/secularist political block represented by the major opposition party, the CHP (Republican People's Party)—especially among the conservative periphery of the society that corresponds to large masses—the more its illiberal posturing has intensified. As such, strong criticisms of the AKP rule have arisen from various public intellectuals, journalists, and NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) from different ideologies and classes within the Turkish society.[4]

While Turkey's portrayal as a "model secular liberal democratic nation" in the MENA has started to show signs of systemic failure,[5] the mobilization of the Kurdish political movement in Turkey provides a new and alternative model of modernity for the region. While hopes for the emergence of a moderate Islamist and democratic political model have been dashed by the intensifying illiberalism of the AKP since 2013, the Kurdish political movement in Turkey has adopted a radical democratic platform that strives to be the political voice of socialists, feminists, ecologists, and LGBTTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, and queer) groups. The struggle of these hitherto "minoritised" groups has not only been championed by a small elite clique as this pluralist democratic ideal has instead been internalized by large masses within the Kurdish community as well as by the various pro-Kurdish segments of Turkish society such as left liberals.

Since the mid-2000s, it has become apparent that a genuine left-wing platform for liberties and social justice has been popularized via the broadening appeal of the Kurdish political movement—most recently seen in the success of radical democratic HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party) on June 7, 2015, parliamentary election.[6] The rise of the HDP has been a product of evolving demographic and geo-structural dynamics in the country. The huge number of Kurds living in urban areas of western Turkey as a result of massive migration waves and Istanbul's centuries-old cosmopolitan atmosphere seems to be the key factors that gave birth to a model of modernity jointly fueled by Istanbul and Diyarbakir—in other words, by the pro-Kurdish Turkish left and the Kurdish national movement centered in eastern Turkey. As a result, several notable Turkish socialist groups have chosen to collaborate with the Kurdish movement in their struggle to democratize Turkey and acquire more liberties. The Turkish socialist parties have made their bid for elections under the roof of the Kurdish movement, managing to reach a wider electorate base (Göksel and Tekdemir 2017). Before the electoral success of the HDP in the June 7 parliamentary election in 2015, the first fruits of a Turkish leftist-Kurdish alliance

[4]See, for instance, *Bianet* (2011), Brownlee (2016), and Tuğal (2016).

[5]For more details on the rise and fall of the Turkish model narrative, see Göksel (2016) and Tuğal (2016).

[6]The party gained more than 13% of all votes in this election, becoming the first Kurdish-led party to successfully pass the 10% country-wide election threshold required to enter the Turkish parliament.

was seen in the 2014 presidential election in which the HDP cochair Selahattin Demirtaş[7] surprisingly gained 9.7% of the national vote, an amount of support that was unprecedented for Kurdish-led parties which generally gained around 4–6% in the earlier elections (*The Guardian* 2014a).

The 2014 election was the first of its kind in Turkey in terms of electing a president on popular vote as the president was elected by members of parliament in the past. The amendment of voting regulations made it possible for citizens of Turkey living abroad to participate in elections as well. The then-Prime Minister Erdoğan visited several European cities as part of his election campaign and so did Demirtaş. However, this time Demirtaş visited European cities with sizable diaspora of Turkish citizens not as merely the representative of a pro-Kurdish party as he was competing for the highest official position to represent all the peoples of the country. This marked a critical juncture in the history of the Republic.

A "contentious identity politics" strategy was pursued by the Kurdish political movement in Turkey for nearly a century (Göksel 2015). Over the course of this struggle, they resorted to various methods and demonstrated various political inclinations—ranging from an asymmetric warfare campaign for secession and for building an independent state comprising of predominantly Kurdish areas of Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Iran to attempts of peaceful reconciliation with the Turkish state for the purpose of gaining Kurdish political autonomy while keeping the country united. During the post-Cold War period—particularly in the late 1990s and throughout the 2000s—the main strategy of the Kurdish movement has evolved into what is often referred to as "Turkeyfication" (*Türkiyelileşme*) which basically means the renunciation of the earlier secessionist agenda for the sake of democratizing Turkey from within and gradually expanding the political liberties of the Kurdish community (Kavak 2010, 2012b).

The adoption of Turkeyfication by the Kurdish movement occurred as a result of various pragmatic considerations. On the one hand, the Kurdish movement sought to gain an increasingly influential role in terms of determining the politics of Turkey and the Middle East by entering into negotiations with the incumbent AKP administration (Göksel 2015, pp. 292–293). On the other hand, various pro-Kurdish actors—especially those existing in the legal sphere such as the BDP (Peace and Democracy Party) and its successor HDP—have followed Turkeyfication in an attempt to enter the Turkish parliament via gaining the votes of many conventionally disadvantaged social segments of Turkey such as Alevis, non-Muslims, women, LGBTTQ, and environmentalists rather than solely being the political representative of Kurds.[8] In this context, the presidential candidacy of a Kurdish

[7]Demirtaş and many other HDP members of the parliament have recently been imprisoned on charges of supporting terrorism; they remain in jail at the time of the writing of this work.

[8]See Kavak (2010, 2012b) for some of the earliest compherensive scholarly studies on Turkeyfication. For more details on the dynamics of the post-Gezi rise and decline of the HDP within Turkish politics, see Göksel and Tekdemir (2017).

MP coming from the Kurdish movement to serve the entire society of Turkey was the peak of the Turkeyfication strategy (Kavak 2012b).

During the presidential election campaign, Demirtaş insisted on presenting himself as the "candidate of all peoples and of change" (*halkların ve değişimin adayı*). "Peoples" in plural form implied that Demirtaş and the HDP recognized Turkey as a highly pluralistic multiethnic society rather than seeking to preserve the status quo of a strict nation-state based on the forceful assimilation of all communities into a constructed identity of "Turkishness." When evaluated in the context of the history of pro-Kurdish parties, the relatively successful results of elections in 2014 and 2015 symbolized a new stage of Turkeyfication. In addition to obtaining wider popular support, the pro-Kurdish movement had—for the first time—gained the ability to strongly influence the evolution of Turkish politics and society through legal electoral competition. The rise of the HDP's popularity throughout 2014 (and for the most part of 2015 until the November 1 parliamentary election) impacted on Turkish politics as great numbers of people from various ethnic and religious minorities became members of the party, some even managing to get elected as members of parliament on June 7, 2015. Arguably affected by the HDP's ability to garner votes from minorities, the AKP and the CHP also nominated candidates from minority communities in both of the parliamentary elections held in 2015. Yet, the HDP proved to be the true champion of minority rights in the country with the highest proportion of minority MPs among its ranks. The party also advocated politics of gender equality, introducing a quota of affirmative action for the nomination of MPs (50% for women and 10% for the members of the LGBTTQ community). Largely due to the above policies of the HDP, the June 7 election witnessed to the largest number of women and LGBTTQ individuals nominated as well as being elected as MPs in the history of Turkey (*Hurriyet Daily News* 2015).

The Turkeyfication strategy of the HDP constituted an elaborate "radical democratic"[9] response to the Turkish ultranationalism that has come to characterize the AKP rule since 2013. The peaceful incorporation of the Kurdish movement into the mainstream Turkish political structure via the HDP was the distinguishing characteristics of the "Kurdish Spring" in Turkey—unlike the Syrian and Iraqi contexts where the Kurdish fight over territory continued since the early 2010s. Unlike the Kurdish movements in Syria and Iraq, the legal Kurdish movement in Turkey pursued a political agenda that stressed the democratization of the entire Turkey (in addition to maintaining its pro-Kurdish core aims) rather than merely employing a discourse of "Kurdish liberation." However, the collapse of the peace negotiations between the AKP administration and the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party)—the illegal armed wing of the Kurdish movement in Turkey—in the summer of 2015 and the resuming violent conflict across the country has cost the lives of thousands of people. As of the writing of this study, the armed conflict continues, and the asymmetric warfare campaign continues to target civilians in urban areas.

[9]For a detailed study of "radical democracy," see Tekdemir (2016).

The Turkeyfication process of the HDP - and the broader Kurdish political movement it represents - has not collapsed, but it has been overshadowed by the ongoing violent conflict between the Turkish armed forces and the PKK in recent years. Unfortunately, the intense pain inflicted upon the citizenry may weaken the conflict resolution and reconciliation efforts for many years to come.

The Increasing Visibility of Kurds as Political Actors

Since the beginning of the Syrian Civil War in 2011 and the emergence of ISIS aggression in both Iraq and Syria, Kurds have attracted unprecedented attention from the international community, and they have been covered extensively in the world media (Tuncel 2011; Hirst 2013). Two aspects of Kurdish political struggle have been highlighted in particular: the first is the Kurds' determined resistance against the expansion of extremist Islamism across the Middle East, and the second is their pro-modern outlook which appears to have won the "hearts" of Western audiences as well as that of the "global South" which tend to perceive the Kurdish armed struggle against ISIS as a "righteous cause" (Sabio 2015). For instance, several observers have drawn parallels between the Kurdish national struggle in Rojava and the Zapatistas' anti-capitalist, feminist, autonomist revolutionary movement in Chiapas, Mexico (Kavak 2011; Stanchev 2015).

The political awakening in Rojava has greatly contributed to the global recognition of Kurdish nationhood, a process that initially began to emerge after the establishment of a de facto independent Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in northern Iraq with the post-war Iraqi Constitution in 2005. The strong armed resistance of Kurds during the Siege of Kobane (from September 2014 to March 2015) and the Shingal battles (throughout 2014 and 2015) against ISIS has enabled Kurdish nationhood to be more visible and legitimate in the eyes of the greater world public, though it has not yet been publically embraced by global powers such as the USA, Russia, and China (*Reuters* 2014). Though official policy changes have not fully occurred yet, de facto developments can be observed in terms of greater international support for the recognition of Kurdish nationhood—particularly in the case of several notable major powers such as the UK, France, and Israel. For instance, the Halabja massacre (which claimed the lives of around 5000 Iraqi Kurdish civilians) committed via the chemical weapons of Saddam Hussein's regime in 1988 was recently recognized as "genocide" by the UK parliament on February 28, 2013, after the vigorous lobbying efforts by the Kurdish diaspora in the UK. Another recent parliamentary report adopted by the UK House of Commons criticized the UK government's lack of recognition of the Kurdish national struggles in Turkey and Syria while it praised the official government support for the Barzani-led KRG in Iraq (House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee 2015). In reference to this report, Gary Kent—the Director of the All-Party

Parliamentary Group on the Kurdistan Region in Iraq—stated that that the “historic taboo on [the idea of] Kurdish independence is finally broken” (*Rudaw Daily* 2015):

> The report says: a centralized Iraq has gone, a looser federation is better, and the Brits can quietly help mend fences but must get their diplomatic act together. The priority for the time being is defeating Daish (ISIS) but Kurdish independence is a medium-term possibility. Britain should work with the Kurds, who are on the same side as the west and ahead of many in the Middle East but who should embrace major internal reform.

While the improving trade relations (especially oil) between the UK and the KRG can be seen as the main factor behind the relatively sympathetic approach of the UK toward Iraqi Kurds, the ideological rift between the conservative UK administration and the socialist Syrian Kurds can be suggested as the main barrier to the full recognition of Kurdish self-rule in Syria. The PYD (*Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat*, Democratic Union Party), namely, the main Kurdish political actor in Syria, is not fully trusted by Western powers such as the UK and the USA due to its close ideological and organizational links with the PKK which is recognized as a terrorist organization by NATO, the USA, EU, and Turkey. By contrast, the PDK (*Partiya Demokrata Kurdistane*, Kurdistan Democratic Party), namely, Massoud Barzani’s ruling party in KRG, has been a loyal ally of the West since the First Gulf War in 1991. Nevertheless, even though the UK parliamentary report on the idea of Kurdish independence did not credit the Syrian Kurdish movement as much as the Iraqi Kurds of Barzani, it should be noted that the text still praised the Syrian Kurdish efforts against ISIS as well as directly naming the PYD responsible for the successful Kurdish resistance against what is termed “dangerous jihadist expansionism in the Middle East” (House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee 2015, pp. 49–51).

Another notable example for the increasing visibility and acceptance of Kurdish nation building is the stance adopted by Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu who recently declared his open support for the prospect of an independent Kurdish state: “We should support the Kurdish aspiration for independence” (*The Guardian* 2014b). Netanyahu justified this pro-Kurdish statement by arguing that “the rise of al-Qaeda-backed Sunni extremists, as well as Iranian-backed Shia forces, has created an opportunity for enhanced regional cooperation [between Israel and Kurds],” adding that Jordan is also facing a growing threat of spillover from the violent conflicts in the neighboring Iraq and Syria. Hence, the national security of the Kingdom of Jordan and that of Kurds who control the oil-rich autonomous region of northern Iraq should be bolstered according to PM Netanyahu. Israel’s open call for the establishment of Kurdish statehood as part of its national security strategy of “alliance with moderate forces” across the Middle East should be considered alongside the increased visibility and support the Kurdish national struggle has recently gained from foreign governments and the global civil society due to their role in containing jihadist aggressors such as ISIS and al-Qaeda.

Feminine Nation Building and the Kurdish Polity in Syria

The Kurdish nation-building process in the region has a strong feminist emancipation aspect which has become more visible in the context of the ongoing armed struggle as thousands of Kurdish women have voluntarily taken up arms to fight against ISIS oppression over women. ISIS' ever-worsening record of human rights violations and various disturbing crimes against the women of the Levant (i.e., mass rape and torture campaigns, establishment of "sex slave markets," and forced marriage of ISIS terrorists with kidnapped women) has attracted the attention of the Western media. In this context, many globally popular women's magazines such as *Elle* (2014) and *Marie Claire* (2014) have published widely read news stories about young Kurdish women militants fighting ISIS, portraying them in an overwhelmingly positive light as "courageous freedom fighters" and hybrid role models that simultaneously display "feminine" and "masculine" characteristics—wearing makeup while dressed in military camouflage uniforms, comfortably holding automatic rifles and heavy rocket launchers at the frontiers of the battlefield.

It is ironic that the aforementioned magazines actually represent a certain biased understanding of the concept of "feminine beauty," namely, one that is fully compatible with the reproduction and distribution of a women's image that serves the needs of the consumerist culture of contemporary global capitalism. The Eurocentric depiction of "brave" Syrian Kurdish women militants as some type of "wild and beautiful Amazon warriors" to sell more magazines is actually a usurpation of women's self-agency as well as Kurds' various sacrifices while building their nation at a time when they are facing an immediate mortal threat from the ISIS. Nevertheless, despite its ethnocentric and capitalist/consumerist lenses that reflect a highly deformed way of understanding the Kurdish struggle for freedom, such media coverage still benefits the ongoing Kurdish nation-building process which has now found itself a receptive target audience in the Western public opinion. The fact that the Kurdish nationalist struggle does not only consist of a male-dominated fighting force and that it also represents the emancipation of women against the misogynist barbarism of ISIS has provided Kurds with wide public appeal and legitimacy.

The Kurdish Spring in Syria gathered pace in recent years mostly due to the focus of the international public on the ISIS threat to "modernity" and "civilization" in the Middle East and the emergence of the Kurdish movement as the means to contain and defeat this jihadist anti-Western uprising. Yet, it should be noted that the Kurdish Spring actually has its intellectual roots in the Kurdish struggle in Turkey where the socialist/ecofeminist Kurdish political movement has been shaped and led by the PKK for many decades (*Peace in Kurdistan* 2015). In fact, the affinity between the PKK and PYD is so strong that the founding manifesto of the latter in 2003 named "democratic confederalism" as one of its ideologies and the imprisoned leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, as one of its "inspirational founding fathers" (*Peace in Kurdistan* 2015). Hence, it could be argued that the Kurdish Spring in

Syria has been fueled by the slowly evolving, yet at the same time, transformative Kurdish Spring in Turkey.

Undoubtedly, the Kurdish women's struggle for freedom has been effective in terms of transforming the Kurdish society over the years. While strictly patriarchal structures are still in operation across the different parts of the predominantly Kurdish areas of the Middle East, the main body of the pro-Kurdish actors in Turkey has usually been led by influential female figures such as Leyla Zana. The PKK as a "vanguard party"[10] of the Kurdish national movement in Turkey and Syria has long asserted that Kurdish men must accept their female counterparts as equals so that they can together create a healthier Kurdish nation with the support of strong independent women. The most tangible example of this pro-gender equality stance is the cochairperson mechanism that has been implemented across all party positions from local governments and metropolitan municipalities to the party's neighborhood organizations and provincial administrations. As such, each post within the Kurdish political movement has a female and a male cochair share power—a system that stands as a unique case in the Middle East and a rarity even in the most developed Western European societies with the notable exception of "green" and feminist political movements.

In light of the strongly established practice of power sharing between two genders, one would not find it hard to understand why women have been positioned as key decision-makers within Kurdish parties, armed units, and civil offices even at the time of desperate struggles such as the Siege of Kobane (Tastekin 2015). It is noteworthy that Kurdish female politicians represent their national movement in their capacity as leaders even at a time of war which conventionally brings about a male-dominated political structure, because war is generally the "field of expertise of men." For instance, on 10th February 2015, the French President Hollande hosted Asya Abdullah, the co- chair of the Democratic Union Party (PYD), Nesrin Abdullah, the commander of the YPJ (YPG's women units), and Khaled Issa, the PYD representative in Paris in a meeting held at the personal and official invitation of Hollande. Accordingly, while Asya Abdullah attended the meeting in her traditional Kurdish costume, Nesrin Abdullah attended in her combat uniform (Tastekin 2015). As such, the female commanderships of Kurdish troops (YPJ)[11] constitute a very significant part of the YPG which is the armed wing of the PYD in Syria. Another prominent example for women's strong involvement in political life within the Kurdish movement is the gender quota practice of pro-Kurdish parties operating in Turkey. In the Turkish Grand National Assembly's (TBMM) 23rd legislative term, the proportion of women MPs to the whole number of MPs was

[10]The "vanguard party" is a political/ideological term originally coined by Vladimir Lenin: "We shall have occasion further on to deal with the political and organizational duties which the task of emancipating the whole people from the yoke of autocracy imposed upon us. At this point, we wish to state only that the role of vanguard fighter can be fulfilled only by a party that is guided by the most advanced theory" (Lenin 1973, p. 29).

[11]For more information, see the website of *Yekineyen Parastina Jin* (Women's Defence Units): http://www.ypgrojava.com/ku/index.php/ypj

only 9 per cent. However, the then pro-Kurdish party, DTP's (Democratic Society Party) women MPs constituted 38 percent of the whole number of the DTP MPs whereas the other three political parties AKP, CHP and MHP had much lower ratios - 9 per cent, 8 per cent and 2 per cent respectively. It is important to note that the party with the highest proportion of women MPs in the Turkish parliament at the time of the writing of this study is the Kurdish-led HDP which is way ahead of the Turkish parties (AKP, CHP, and MHP) in this field.[12]

In the legal political arena, the Kurdish movement in Turkey has demonstrated a syncretic green, socialist, feminist, and ethno-national ideology which emerges from the writings of Öcalan who originally developed the doctrines of the Kurdish movement's outlawed armed wing, the PKK. Since the early 1980s, the PKK itself has consisted of mixed-gender fighting units. The common imagination of war and politics as the sole "domain of men and masculinity" has been challenged by the Kurdish movement as it has long encouraged the participation of women in both legal political organizations (e.g., the HDP and the PYD) and illegal armed groups (e.g., the YPG and the PKK).[13]

Conclusion

To sum up, we should avoid the commonly repeated trap of limiting the rise of "Kurdish nationhood" to the recent "Kurdish Spring" of the last few years or to the 2011 Arab Uprisings. Kurds, as a people, have preoccupied the international political arena for more than three decades—particularly since the creation of a buffer zone between the Saddam Hussein regime in Baghdad and the Kurdish autonomous region in northern Iraq after the Gulf War in 1991. Moreover, Kurds have been leading an armed struggle in Turkey since 1984 while affiliates of the PKK have been involved in similar conflicts for Kurdish emancipation in Syria and Iran. Hence, the Kurdish Spring may have been inspired by the 2011 Arab Uprisings, yet its long genealogy and social origins in the twentieth century must be acknowledged. In fact, a largely independent Kurdish polity (the KRG) had already been recognized in Iraq by 2005. Moreover, even though the PYD is a relatively new political organization (founded in 2003) and that the self-rule of PYD-led cantons has only emerged after the Syrian Civil War began in 2011, Syrian Kurds had nonetheless already joined arms with their fellow Kurds under the various umbrella organizations of the PKK since the 1980s.

After three decades of armed struggle, the Kurdish movement in Turkey has gained more political rights such as the legalization of Kurdish language while also

[12]For more information on the practice of gender quotas within the Kurdish movement in Turkey, see Kavak (2012a, p. 166).

[13]Handan Caglayan's (2007) work on the gender issue within the Kurdish movement puts forward an original critical approach toward the discourse of "women's emancipation."

managing to bring the Turkish state to the negotiating table during the so-called peace process (from March 2013 to June 2015). The series of events unintentionally triggered by the Arab Spring across the Middle East has resulted in an increased visibility and legitimacy for Kurds in Syria, Iraq, and Turkey. The global media and civil society have begun to perceive Kurdish-controlled zones in the region as a "safe heaven" for diverse communities fleeing ISIS brutality (e.g., Turcomans, Shi'a Arabs, Circassians, Yezidis, and Assyrians). While Kurds had previously been depicted in Western media mostly as "victims" of regional or foreign powers, the recent years has witnessed to a new image of Kurds as a brand-new "modern nation" in the Middle East, in other words as a potential role model of "civilization" and "modernity" like the way in which Turkey was once described as a guide for the Muslim world.

As many have recently observed in the case of the Turkish model, discourses based on the application of "role models" for the Middle East are generally destined to fail due to many internal and external variables shaping the socioeconomic and political trajectory of this complex region. Therefore, it would be unrealistically ambitious to refer to the Kurdish political experience in Syria, Iraq, and Turkey as the new role model of "Westernization" in the Middle East. However, it is also apparent that the strategies and doctrines used by the Kurdish political movement—should they be ultimately successful in their endeavor to obtain national emancipation—will have long-term implications for other societies in the Middle East and beyond. Moreover, this process will probably bring about a radical redistribution of power and resources while spreading unconventional ideas (hitherto envisaged to be inapplicable to this region) such as gender equality, ecological modernity, and socialism. This ever-increasing potential to make a "real change" in the affairs of the Middle East is what makes the Kurdish political movement so visible and morally strong in an age of "springs," in other words in a period of seismic upheavals and "uprisings of hope" across the world.

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Chapter 14
Conclusion: Turkey and the Middle East in an Age of Turbulence

Hüseyin Işıksal

Since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, Turkish foreign policy was predominantly based upon Westernization, the balance of power, and the preservation of status quo principles. In connection with these norms, Turkey followed an isolationist approach and avoided Middle Eastern entanglements during the Cold War era. However, these principles were no longer responding to the needs and ambitions of modern Turkey in the early twenty-first century. The US withdrawal from Iraq and the corresponding decline in its regional influence, the Sunni-Shi'a sectarian divisions, and the relatively passive stance of Russia left a power vacuum in the Middle East that paved a way for increased Turkish interventionism. Not surprisingly, Turkish foreign policy has been transformed noticeably under the AKP (Justice and Development Party) rule since 2002. More importance has been given to historically neglected areas and regions, particularly the neighboring countries and the Middle East. Turkish foreign policy has tried to be more proactive, more multidimensional, and more assertive regarding its own policy priorities.

The most visible area of this new foreign policy initiative has been the Middle East. Turkey's geostrategic location, historical roots in the area, and its religious and cultural bonds provide it with more opportunities than any extra-regional power. Furthermore, both the acute and the newly emerging problems in Turkey's neighborhood require more proactive and rhythmic foreign policy objectives. Simply stating, with an emphasis on the use of soft power, a more determined role has been envisioned for Turkey, making it an active regional and global power. The most important aspect of Turkey's new foreign policy is the "zero problems with neighbors' policy" which stated that the most important goal of Turkey is to be "a strategic country." This policy initially aims to "normalize" foreign relations

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with neighboring countries and then seeks to develop relations through constructive initiatives based upon political, economic, and sociocultural relations. By using soft power tools, Turkey aims to break state-based boundaries and reach people in its surrounding countries, particularly through an economic perspective. The most effective result of the zero problems with neighbors' policy was achieved in the establishment of a partnership with the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq.

On the other hand, the Middle East is an important yet extremely chaotic region. In addition to its cultural and religious importance as the historical location where three of the major religions of our time (Christianity, Islam, and Judaism) originated, it also remains central to foreign policy considerations of global powers due to its geostrategic importance and rich hydrocarbon resources. The sustainability of the supply of oil resources, the containment of Russian influence and regional penetration, the protection of the state of Israel, and the containment of the anti-Western regimes (e.g., Iran) that may endanger the established status quo remain as the main objectives of the Western countries. There is no doubt that these factors make the significance of the Middle East permanent for the foreseeable future. Historically, the Middle East has been divided into various nation-states without any concern for the established tribal, ethnic, and religious divides of the region. The new regimes emerged as pro-Western entities whose stability is vulnerable to external alliances. As a consequence, a strong status quo has been formed in the Middle East after World War II, one that has proven very hard to change ever since. The status quo was formed and supported by both the powerful extra-regional states and the established local collaborators, who are in control of their local populations.

However, there is a largely forgotten and underestimated issue. The political structure that was tailored by Western colonial powers in the post-World War II era did not perfectly "fit" the Middle Eastern realities. In the post-World War II era, the clash between the traditional understandings of sovereignty and the externally imposed Western notions has been a great problem in the Middle East. As contemporary regional problems confirm in almost every case, the "state" in the European Westphalian definition does not correspond to the Middle Eastern realities, even in the early twenty-first century. The Westphalian state has its limits, particularly in terms of ensuring a strong sense of nationhood, loyalty, and citizenship. The failure of the state mechanisms has enhanced the religious and ethnic-based schisms in the region. In other words, the failure of the state and nation-building processes has resulted in a rise of the subnational and transnational identities (in the form of religious, ethnic, and tribal bonds) as the main determinants of polity. In this context, many Middle Eastern countries have become vulnerable to challenging ideologies (e.g., Pan-Arabism and Islamism) and revolutions (e.g., the 2011 Arab Spring) that destabilize the regional order and the Western-imposed status quo.

The Arab Spring not only threatened the aforementioned Western-designed system but also offered promising opportunities for the achievement of the aforementioned foreign policy objectives for Turkey, at least in theory. The electoral victories achieved by the Islamist parties were perceived as the breaking down of the Western-designed status quo in the region by Turkey. Stated differently, considering the

legitimacy and cohesion problem between the Arab regimes and their people, the Arab Spring was seen as a historic opportunity for building further cooperation in economic and political spheres between the new democratically elected governments of the region and Turkey. Furthermore, supporting the "people" against their autocratic regimes was a consistent and reasonable policy, since it was also promoting the AKP's popularity among its supporters at home and in the region.

Following the initial shock of the Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt, the Western powers were able to successfully canalize the Arab Spring toward the long-standing anti-Western regimes in the region—namely, Libya and Syria. Having misread the factors behind the canalization of the second wave of the Arab Spring into Syria, the Turkish decision-makers failed to calculate how the Syrian conflict could destabilize Turkey itself. Even though the uprisings initially seemed as a historic opportunity for the rise of Turkish influence in the region, the outbreak of a civil war in Syria and the intensifying domestic security problems in Turkey sparked the "beginning of the end" for the Turkish model. Then, the Arab Spring has transformed into the "Turkish Autumn" due to the AKP policy-makers' several crucial mistakes.

The foreign policies of countries should not be seen as "untouchable and sacred realms of national identity." To the contrary, I believe that the quality of foreign policy decision-making could only be improved by detailed discussions and critical elucidation. Based on this point, *Turkey's Relations with the Middle East: Political Encounters after the Arab Spring* critically examines the political, economic, and social interactions between Turkey and the post-2011 Middle East. Arguably, it is a detailed and well-timed contribution to the topic with a broad range of contemporary themes centering on the rise and fall of the Turkish model. I have no doubt that it is beneficial for not only scholars and students interested in the political affairs and foreign policy of Turkey but also for researchers with a more general interest in contextualizing and problematizing recent developments in the Middle East.

In order to improve its consistency and reliability, the volume is based on a thematic and chronological study of Turkey-Middle East relations. Meticulous consideration has been given to the categorization and presentation of the contributions in order to ensure that the study operates in a relative manner, and the topic are categorized and narrowed down suitably. For this purpose, the volume is divided into three main parts. Part I discusses the *Turkish Model and the Arab Spring* with the aim to lay out the conceptual foundations of the analysis detailed in the rest of the study. Part II and Part III include specific discussions of several case studies. While the former discusses *Turkey's Relations with Middle Eastern Powers after the Arab Spring*, the latter focuses on *Turkey's Domestic Politics and Relations with Non-State Actors of the Middle East*. As such, the volume aims to highlight the links among related issues in order to maintain that each section's contribution retains analytical cogency and descriptive relevancy to preceding sections.

The first part of the book discusses the Turkish model and the Arab Spring. In the contribution entitled *Turkish Foreign Policy, the Arab Spring and the Syria Crisis: One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, I argue that as the party that had already won

four consecutive parliamentary elections, the AKP supports any changes that emanate from the "people level" in the Middle East. Considering the legitimacy and the cohesion problem between the Arab regimes and their peoples, the Arab Spring uprisings were supported by the AKP. Supporting the "people" against their autocratic regimes was a consistent and reasonable policy bearing a strategic and rational move for future political and economic gains. In this context, in the post-Arab Spring era, the AKP provided political and diplomatic support for Islamist parties across the Middle East. Nevertheless, when the waves of the revolts reached Turkey via the conflict in Syria, the "Arab Spring" turned into the "Turkish Autumn." The failure of Turkish foreign policy became particularly visible in underestimating the resiliency of the Assad regime in Damascus, overrating the power of the opposition, the misperception regarding the power of the ISIS, the refugee problem, and the emergence of the PYD-PKK threat on Turkey's southern border. As a result of these fallacies, Turkey discarded its fundamental foreign policy principle of "zero problems with neighbors'" and lost its role as a mediator in the region. Consequently, after a step forward in Northern Iraq, Turkey took two steps back in Syria both in terms of domestic instability and foreign policy objectives.

The contribution entitled *Eurocentrism Awakened: The Arab Uprisings and the Search for a "Modern" Middle East* by Oğuzhan Göksel argues that the 2011 Arab Uprisings were hailed in the Western world as the harbinger of a "modern" Middle East and the hegemony of corrupt autocrats and the prolonged "dark age" of the Arab world were believed by many to be coming to an end. The Turkish model discourse gained popularity in the wake of the 2011 Arab Uprisings as a potential guide for the modernization of the Middle East and North Africa region. In the context of this discourse, modernization has been defined as *the inevitable path to a liberal democratic, free-market capitalist, secular society* within non-Western settings. According to Göksel, this conceptualization is highly Eurocentric as the contents of modernization are only limited to the contemporary characteristics of social, economic, and political life in Western Europe and Northern America. Moreover, the possibility that socioeconomic and political transformations in non-Western societies may not produce the same outcomes as in the Western experience is completely overlooked.

This contribution criticizes much of the scholarly literature on the Turkish model, arguing that the excessive enthusiasm shown by Western mainstream media and academia toward the promotion of this concept reveals the limits of their understanding of the complexities of MENA societies and polities. Modernization is actually a highly customizable path whose nature is determined mainly by contingent socioeconomic and political characteristics of each country. Therefore, in order to develop a generalizable understanding of modernization in the MENA region and beyond, the Eurocentrism of mainstream literature needs to be replaced with more flexible frameworks such as the ones developed in recent years by proponents of *Post-Colonialism*, *Multiple Modernities Paradigm*, and the *Uneven and Combined Development Theory*.

The third study in this part of the volume is *The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Model for the Middle East* by Stefano M. Torelli. Torelli underlines that between 2002 and 2012, Turkey was often proposed as a model for the Middle East and the broader Muslim world by virtue of its achievements in economic development and democratization. While Ankara has never publically referred to the Turkish model concept, a democratic, prosperous, liberal, and peaceful Turkey acting as the pioneer and leader of the new Middle East seemed an extremely appealing scenario for many observers at the beginning of the Arab Spring. Although the uprisings seemed as a historic opportunity for Turkey, the Turkish model initiated to decline in the post-2011 era. This is because major contradictions have emerged between the promises of the model and the political-economic developments within Turkey. The outbreak of a civil war in Syria was the "beginning of the end" for the Turkish model as it has created many complex problems for Turkish politics, economy and society. The Syrian conflict demonstrates limits of *soft power*-oriented Turkish foreign policy doctrine where the diplomatic and economic tools failed to stop a crisis in the neighboring country. Similarly, political tensions between the AKP and opposition parties in domestic politics have fueled ideological polarization in Turkey and created deep splits in sociopolitical life that also led to the decline of the Turkish model.

The last contribution of the first part is *Ties that Bind: Popular Uprisings and the Politics of Neoliberalism in Turkey and the Middle East* by Cemal Burak Tansel. Tansel suggests that questions of political economy are crucial for understanding the root causes of social uprisings and the enduring challenges faced by mobilized masses. Tansel claims that the AKP has the ability to subvert, manipulate, and instrumentalize the existing circuits of representative democracy to guard not only its own grip on power but also the conduits of capital accumulation. The regime in Turkey has reconstituted its grip on power with a diminished degree of legitimacy. Therefore, the ability of oppositional social forces in constructing inter-/intra-class alliances along with initiating or reinforcing organizations with strong grassroots credentials will be a key factor in any future attempt to challenge the structures of neoliberal hegemony of the AKP and to avoid political relapses that could reproduce these structures.

After the discussion of the Turkish Model and the Arab Spring, the second part of the volume focuses on Turkey's relations with Middle Eastern powers after the Arab Spring. In the first contribution of this part entitled *Political Chaos in Iraq, ISIS and Turkish Foreign Policy: The High Cost of the Westphalian Delusion*, I put forward the idea that the political chaos in Iraq is *not* a contemporary phenomenon that only emerged after the rise of the ISIS. It actually requires the elucidation of various dynamics and challenges, deriving from both the internal and external dynamics of the Middle East in the form of not only political but also religious-, cultural-, economic-, and identity-related factors. Therefore, any analysis that disregards the problematic state formation, artificial borders, legitimacy problem, the paradox of the Westphalian principles, and the negative impact of the deceptive Orientalist discourses cannot truly comprehend the roots of contemporary problems in the region.

The 30-year British rule formed the basis of a political legacy where resorting to violence became the main preference for solving political problems in Iraq. The July 1958 revolution sets a pattern for political turbulence and bloodshed that has characterized the politics of Iraq ever since. During the Saddam Hussein era, the external wars further contributed to this legacy where resorting to violence against the constitutional order and the transfer of power through illegitimate means became the modus operandi that is exploited by ISIS at the present. On the other hand, the high number of civilian casualties in both the 1991 and 2003 Iraqi occupations, the marginalization of Sunnis from the state power and services during Prime Minister al-Maliki's era, and the discourse of the victimization of the Sunni at the hands of Shi'a, Kurds, and the West led to the upsurge of ISIS. In this sense, the Western-oriented attempts to understand the emergence of ISIS naturally have many shortcomings, traceable to the limits of approaches that underline violence by disregarding the other reasons behind the group's rise. Therefore, many analyses have only focused on "mosquitoes" rather than the "swamp" by ignoring the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the Western support for authoritarian regimes in the region, and the unintended consequences of the two US led Iraqi occupations. The Turkish decision-makers have also failed to anticipate the high cost of the Westphalian delusion in Iraq and how the regional conflicts could destabilize Turkey itself. The Iraqi and Syrian crises left a dangerous vacuum of power that was filled by ISIS and the PKK-PYD. Therefore, what remains crucial for Turkey's new Middle East policy is the ability of Turkish decision-makers to convince the Russia-Shi'a-Assad and US-led anti-ISIS coalitions on Turkey's positions in Iraq and Syria.

The second contribution in this section is *The Arab Spring and Turkish-Iranian Relations, 2011–2016* by Süleyman Elik. Elik argues that unlike the Turkish approach that is characterized by a moralist/idealist foreign policy orientation, Iran's attitude toward Middle East and North Africa (MENA) during and after the Arab uprisings has been characterized by realism and self-interest. Tehran perceived these revolts as a valuable opportunity to embed the country's military alliances and to expand Iranian sphere of influence across the region. Iran has strongly supported the Assad regime since the beginning of the Syrian Civil War in 2011. While doing this, being contrary to popular belief, Iran has shown no signs of adhering to an "Islamic revolution discourse." Instead, Shi'a sectarian policies have been followed to fully capture and/or subjugate four key Arab countries—namely, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen. Elik puts forward the idea that although Turkey and Iran are supporting conflicting sides in Syria, the post-2011 turbulence has not actually caused a dramatic crisis in Turkish-Iranian relations. Economic interdependency between the two countries stands as the main factor behind this and the relations between the two countries can be reasonably expected to remain stable regardless of the uncertain trajectories of post-Arab Spring armed conflicts in the Middle East.

The third contribution in this part of the volume is *Assessing the Regional Influence and Relations of Turkey and Saudi Arabia after the Arab Spring* by Konstantinos Zarras. Zarras analyzes the Turkey-Saudi Arabia relations on the

grounds of four regional issues, namely, the Syrian and the Iraqi conflicts, the containment of Iran, and the intra-Sunni competition. Zarras argues that the two regional powers are seeking to extend their influence throughout the region particularly after the drawback of the USA. They have many common interests in both economic and political areas. Their cooperation in the economic sector is reinforced by the complementary character of their economic structures. Similarly in political realms, both Turkey and Saudi Arabia are the main regional supporters of the Syrian opposition, they have a consensus on Iran's nuclear program and both countries aim to limit Iran's exercise of influence in the region. Turkey and Saudi Arabia also have common interests on the struggle against ISIS, keeping the integration of Iraq and protecting the rights of the Palestinians. Having said this, their policies are not identical in relation to the role of the Muslim Brotherhood in the future of Syria and the degree of Iran's containment. Turkey is more flexible and seeks to cooperate with Iran in Syria and in other related economic fields. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia regards Iran as the most dangerous threat for its national security and territorial integrity.

The last contribution of the second part is *Turkey, Cyprus and the Arab Uprisings* by Nikos Christofis. The study discusses the AKP's Cyprus policy within the context of the party's broader Eastern Mediterranean strategy. Christofis argues that the AKP's divergence from the traditional state policy on Cyprus had multiple dimensions and it marked the first notable clash with the Kemalist establishment. During its first term in power in the early 2000s, the AKP had changed the traditional Cyprus policy of Turkey in order to ease accession to the EU and to weaken the position of the Kemalist military-bureaucratic establishment in the country that considered itself as the only agent of Western modernity. In this context, the AKP supported the Annan Plan referendum in 2004, which was a unique opportunity to unite the island under a bicommunal and bizonal federation. However, the AKP's pro-European policy began to change when the EU failed to keep its promises regarding to removal of the inhuman embargo on the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) following the acceptance of the plan by Turkish Cypriots and the rejection of it by the Greek Cypriots. Christofis underlines that Turkey's Eastern Mediterranean strategy shifted toward securitization after Israel's Gaza flotilla attack in 2010. Additionally, the cooperation agreements between Israel and the Republic of Cyprus regarding offshore hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation within the claimed Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the island clash with Turkey's own EEZ, leading to a return to Ankara's old balance of power-oriented politics regarding to Cyprus.

Having discussed the Turkish model and Turkey's relations with major Middle Eastern powers after the Arab Spring, the third and the final part of the volume focuses on *Turkey's Domestic Politics and Relations with Non-State Actors of the Middle East*. The first contribution of this part is *Re-evaluating the Sources and Fragility of Turkey's Soft Power after the Arab Uprisings* by Michelangelo Guida and Oğuzhan Göksel. Guida and Göksel argue that in the early twenty-first century, the possession of "soft power" has become a useful strategy for gaining more control over the outcome of international political issues, because it has become more

difficult to compel international actors through the principal levers of hard power. The Turkish policy-makers have recognized the relevance of soft power for contemporary international relations and, at least since 2010, created various institutions to enhance Turkey's capability to influence foreign actors and international public opinion.

The rise of Turkey's soft power in its surrounding areas throughout the 2000s has been recognized by many observers, leading to the emergence of a rich and ever-growing scholarly literature; however, the unexpected consequences of the 2011 Arab Uprisings, most notably in the case of the Syrian Civil War, have proven that both the scholars and Turkish policy-makers have overemphasized the ability of soft power tools such as cultural influence to enable Turkey to reach its foreign policy objectives in the Middle East. In this regard, the necessity for sustaining soft power tools with hard power reserves such as economic resources and military forces has been neglected, resulting in a defective understanding of soft power caused largely by the ambiguity of the theoretical framework provided by Joseph Nye—the founding father of the concept. Guida and Göksel concludes that a "fragility of soft power" has manifested in the case of Turkey because of the currently unconsolidated and problematic state of Turkish hard power reserves such as economic capacity and democratic institutions.

The second chapter in this part is *Comparing the Political Experiences of Justice and Development Party in Turkey and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt* by Hakan Köni. Köni argues that Turkey and Egypt are sharing similar sociopolitical and economic background, and the conservative political movements operating in these two countries bear notable resemblances. For instance, the discourses of conservative movements in both countries support democracy, human rights, the rule of law, economic liberalism, and regional and global activism. Both movements intent to liberate conservative life from the pressures of top-down secular social engineering and initiate a social change program in line with conservative values. Having said this, Köni underlines that the conservative movements of Turkey and Egypt also have major differences particularly on the issue of secularism where the latter considers *sharia* as superior to all other types of legal-political systems.

The third contribution in this part of the volume is entitled *Turkey's Evolving Relations with the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) of Iraq since the Arab Spring* by Nathaniel Handy. Handy suggests that there have been substantial changes in the composition of the Turkish government and its relationship with the Kurds within and beyond Turkey with the rise of the AKP to power. The 1991 Gulf War and the 2003 Iraq War fundamentally shifted the balance of power within Iraq in the favor of the Kurds. Handy underlines the unprecedented Turkish economic penetration into the KRG that makes the country the largest foreign investor by far. According to Hardy, such economic control has come with political dividends—one which Turkey has used to ensure that the KRG government works in concert with Turkey against the PKK and the PYD. By this way, Turkish-KRG relations also lay a persuasive blueprint for the resolution of Turkey's own Kurdish conflict. Therefore, in the period of exceptional instability in the Middle East, Turkey's close relations with the KRG help the country to overcome both internal

and external securitization concerns. In this respect, Handy argues that against the popular belief, Ankara may even support the KRG's unilateral declaration of independence.

The last contribution in the section is *The Arab Spring and the Emergence of a New Kurdish Polity in Syria* by Şeref Kavak. Kavak argues that the Kurds are an increasingly visible actor in the Middle East mainly because of the Syrian Civil War. Kavak suggests that the unintentionally triggered events by the Arab Spring across the Middle East have increased the legitimacy of the Kurds in Syria, Iraq, and Turkey due to Kurds' determined resistance against ISIS. Having said this, Kavak underlines that the Western powers still do not entirely trust the PYD (*Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat*, Democratic Union Party) in Syria because of the armed group's close ideological and organizational links with the PKK which is recognized as a terrorist organization by the NATO, the US, the EU, and Turkey. By contrast, the PDK (*Partiya Demokrata Kurdistane*, Kurdistan Democratic Party), which is the ruling party in KRG under leadership of Massoud Barzani is a highly trusted actor because it has been a loyal ally of the West since the First Gulf War in 1991.

The main challenge faced in this volume has been the editing of the presentation of the contributions. Since the Turkish politics and foreign policy are highly politicized subjects, the language and the presentation of the chapters were a major problem. By recognizing the complexity of analyzing these topics, this volume attempted to make a modest contribution to the critical understanding of the Turkish foreign policy in general and to Turkey-Middle East relations after the Arab Spring through critical examinations. Hopefully, this study can encourage others to adopt fresher and differentiated perspectives on this topic regardless of the interpretations that we present in this volume.

As a last word to the entire volume, two concluding remarks are arguably necessary, not only in terms of evaluating the Turkish foreign policy but also in analyzing the affairs of the broader Middle East region. First, new critical analyses should focus on *society* rather than *polity* and that political behavior and culture should be examined within the extremely complex network of relationships in the Middle East. Secondly, there is a need for a re-identification of the problems, concepts, sub-concepts, typologies, and eventual solutions of this region. Therefore, it is necessary to critically review the existing approaches and evaluations of the "others" from the lenses of the "others themselves" by recognizing and respecting their differences.

A potential avenue of future research on Turkish foreign policy may address the policy orientations in the new political era after the country's 16 April 2017 referendum on a new constitution that envisages the replacement of Turkish parliamentary system with a super-presidential one. As a result of the approval of the referendum package by a narrow margin (approximately 51% of the votes), the constitution has changed to abolish the role of the prime minister, and it has concentrated power in the hands of the president in the context of an executive presidency—in the manner of the USA and various Latin American countries. Only time will show whether more centralized decision-making mechanisms would

mean a more stabilized foreign policy vision for Turkey and more effective results in terms of achieving predetermined foreign policy objectives. What will not change, however, is regardless of the rise or decline of the present or future Turkish model(s) discourses, the country will stay at the very core of any debates concerning foreign policy considerations in the Middle East with its large economy, political dynamism, and central geostrategic position.

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